

The Beat Within

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside



Volume 9.17



"Serpents And Plumes"

art by Michael Orozco



Editor's Note

Dedication is as good of a word as any to start this issue off in this editor's note. Dedication is what we feel from you many writers, be it you writers who show up week in and week out in our numerous workshops despite the relentless drama, stress, pecking orders, and nonstop soap opera that comes with incarceration. Even when we think our workshops are the same ol' same ol', which they are, you still show the dedication and respect to come through and participate.

Dedication to your writing says plenty. Writing isn't an easy thing to do, especially when you are self taught, yet you write every week from the heart, misspellings, bad grammar and all, plus knowing that your piece will be read and judged by numerous readers. Yet you prevail, with dedication, to touch a life, to teach! Bravo!

Speaking of readers, that too has a core group of dedicated individuals. They may write for The Beat on occasion, but the most important thing is that they get their Beat to read.

When reading The Beat, what do you get out of it? We can only guess — some of you get valuable lessons, others find that reading the scripts is like taking a trip down memory lane. Many of you find comfort in the pieces, too, knowing that you are not alone in the (good and bad) feelings and stress you are going through, while sitting solo in a cell in the criminal justice system. Plus, many of you learn from the writings of the many talented teachers who grace the pages of The Beat.

Incredible dedication is also shown by you writers who reach out to us via mail. Wow, you guys drop us hundreds and hundreds of words each week, along with a 37 cent stamp. Damn, we are always touched when we see our Beat mailboxes filled to the brim with letters from this group home, that rehab, that faraway boot camp, that level-four prison, from that halfway house down the street to the California Youth Authority, which doesn't even allow The Beat in their institutions. We even find dedicated writers on San Quentin's death row, and on various levels of isolation away from human contact. Amazing!

Dedication is what it takes to put this paper together. Dedication is what it takes on the daily to provide the type of services we have come to be known for. There is no side-stepping, half-ass b-shhh when it comes to working at The Beat Within. We do have some colleagues who need to find other means of employment, because their fire, their dedication is not as strong as it should be, but we give breaks to many with the hope that they get it together. One of our biggest weaknesses is that we let some folks slide some in our office. This work is so intense and nonstop that sometimes, in truth, it is easier to ignore an individual who slacks off on the job. Honestly, our primary dedication is to the workshops, the typing, the responding and the editing of the publication. Our biggest problem is not having enough funding to do a better job in monitoring the young people who work at The Beat.

Wow, we are getting off the topic, here we are talking about dedication, and dedication is what many of you need to find within yourselves. You need to dedicate yourself to bettering your lives, finding a path that is going to lead you away from danger, away from death and destruction. Dedicating yourself to changing your life takes a strong brave person. Many have done just that, while others have said this and that about going on the right path but eventually fail. You readers must remember, despite family and friends, we are still all alone in this world. And although some help does convince us about what decisions to make, like what roads to go down, ultimately, whatever path we choose, we have to live with ourselves and the decisions we make for the rest of our lives, so hopefully they're smart moves, and not a stupid, "I was high" or "I wish I could do it over" type move.

With this said, we are very honored to feature the four winners of our 9th Editorial Note Writing Contest. The question proposed to the writers, in case you forgot, was: "What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?" The twenty or so writers who took on the challenge stepped up big with details as they shared a part of their lives, while envisioning on paper a way of doing or reliving something over. Many gave us scenarios that truly took us into their worlds, from the pros and cons, to the limited and numerous choices they truly had. With that said, the following four writers, whose pieces are once again featured on page 57, take us down their paths, through their choices, while we see what happened and where it brought many of them.

Congratulations to our fourth-place writer, the impressive Young Bouncer, presently housed at High Desert State Prison, to our third-place writer, D-Boy, who writes us from the State Prison Correctional Facility in Soledad, to our second-place writer, the

poetic Shakey, who's days away from paroling from the Central California Women's Facility State Prison in Chowchilla, to our first-place poet, the man formerly known as Baby A, Shawn Rogers, who delivers a knockout piece from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City. Again, congratulations writers, the money orders are in the mail!

If you missed out on that writing contest, then try our latest contest question, the 10th Editorial Note Writing Contest, which is open to all readers of The Beat Within . . . We want to know from you your all time favorite movie and why. We are curious as to why this movie moves you so much. Tell us how it relates to you. Tell the readers about a time, maybe the first time, you saw the movie? We want the inviting details as to why this movie will always have an important place on your movie shelf/heart. Be creative when painting the picture of this special, special movie.

With this said, the contest deadline for submissions is July 31, 2004. We will award four prizes/money orders for our favorite pieces. Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders. With this said, good luck writers in attempting to create a moving and telling piece about your all time favorite movie. We encourage all of you editor's note readers to take this topic on! Now take us to the movies!

OK readers, the topics discussed prior to the writing you are about to read in this fabulous issue was the not-so-popular, "If You Could Write A Speech — If you could write a speech about the worst thing that you've experienced and what you did to overcome it, how would it go? And for those of you who are going through your worst experience at this very moment, write a speech about what you can do to overcome it.

(We're going to take this topic to another level by offering a twenty-dollar money order to those who put it down so hard they find themselves gracing our piece of the week pages. So we hope to see some really powerful pieces. You can use this money when you get to where you're going — whether it's home or another institution.)"

Our second topic was "Telling — People have used all sorts of terms to describe it: Snitching, debriefing, dropping a dime, etc. etc. What we would like to know is how you feel about it? When is it 'cool' or not 'cool' to involve yourself in any of the above?

Some people say that it is a part of being your 'own person and that you got to put yourself and yours before anybody else.' Others say that "it is a selfish thing to do and you are basically putting someone else up to endure something you aren't willing to endure yourself."

How do you define it? Can it be justified? If so, when? If not, why not?

So tell us a story about telling."

In truth, there were not too many breakthrough ideas/revelations on this one. Read on . . . Oh our third topic!

The third topic was the popular, "What brings you down?"

In this issue we have plenty of POWs (Pieces of the Week), so let's get started with the writers who tackled the topic, "If You Could Write A Speech," 'cause for this topic we offered, for the first time ever, a twenty-dollar money order to those workshop writers who stepped up super duper big! Props to the intelligent Gerrell out of 150, for his piece, "A Youth Speaks" on page 4. Also, we find Pink's piece, "In My Eyes" on page 6 to be very, very impressive piece by Afro Sly out of Marin for the heartfelt piece, "Crack Baby," on page 7. Hey, we can't forget Spooky, on the same page, who delivers a painful yet stellar piece called "Lifestyle." OUR final two pieces, come from Kase, who writes from LCRS, takes on death, with "What's Painful." And then there's Tim from Marin, who drops a wonderful yet very sad piece called, "My Speech." Well, we think that's it, so Gerrell, Pink, Spooky Afro Sly, Kase and Tim tell us where you want the \$20 sent, or come on down to the office!

There are more great writings and POWs, too! Major props to Aok, Broken Glass and Chop out of San Mateo, to Lil' Molly, Pastor J-Wizzle and D-Moe out of 150, to M.Reezy out of SF/YGC. These writers are equally impressive.

OK, in closing, dedication is what the above-mentioned writers show, be it from The BWO or from the workshops. Let's hope this dedication you show as writers takes you in a direction that will give you more hope and opportunity to better yourself. Don't forget writing is a great gift to have, but it is the positive action that speaks louder than words.

This issue goes out to the dedicated individuals who are determined to live a healthy, safe life. With that said, dedication is a good word to end this editorial note! Show your dedication!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: Dianne H. is a teacher at Walden House. We're so glad to see elders who work with children step up and write for The Beat! She writes some real stuff here so listen up folks! She has some game to offer, so get it while you can!

Rise On Up

Seeing homeless people shivering
in the rain brings me down.

Hearing people rag on each other brings me down.

Seeing all the phony plastic images on TV does too.

Participating in a demonstration, being there, feeling it,
knowing something real is happening and then seeing
how the media ignores it or pretends to cover it but
doesn't really — that brings me down.

The way our savage leaders are trying to bully the whole
world brings me down.

When I find myself weak and not fulfilling my promises
to myself, that brings me down.

When I forget things I wish I had remembered that
brings me down.

When death comes that'll bring me down but my
essence will rise on up and rejoin all that is.

-Dianne H.



A Youth Speaks

i treat this
like my thesis
well-written topic
broken down into pieces
i introduce this
to produce
words so profuse
it's abuse
how i juice
this beat
like i'm deuce
two people
both equal
like i'm gemini
rather simeon
if i jimmy on
this lock
i could pop it
you can't stop it
so drop it
your whole crew
is microscopic
like particles
while i make
international articles
and on the cover
don't discuss
the baby-mother
business
i've been in this
third l-p
you can't tell me
i witness
first-handed
i'm candid
you can't stand it
respect demanded
and get flown

around the planet
rock-hard
like granite or steel
people should feel me
from newark to israel
and this is real
so i keep makin' the street ballads
while you lookin' for dressin'
to go with your tossed salad
but i'm about to change focus
from the richest to the brokest
i wrote this opus
to reverse the hypnosis
whoever's closest
to the lines gonna win it
you gonna fall tryin'a ball
while my team win the pennant
i'm about to be in it for a minute
then run for senate
make a slum lord be the tenant
give his money to kids to spend it
and then amend it
every law that ever prevented our survival
since the arrival documented in the bible
like mooses and aaron
things gonna change
'cause it's apparent
why every indian wanna be the chief
feed a man till he's full
and he still want beef
give me grief
try to thief off my piece
why for you to increase
i must decrease
and if i treat you kindly
does it mean that i'm weak
you hear me speak
and think i won't take it to the streets
i know enough cats
that don't turn the other cheek

but i try to keep it civilized
like menelik
and other african czars
observing stars
with war scars
get yours in the capitalistic system
so many caught or bought
you can't list them
how you gonna idealize the missin'
to survive is to stay alive
in the face of opposition
even when they comin' gunnin'
i stand my position
i know the mission since my conception
let's free the people from deception
if you lookin' for the answers
you have to ask the questions
and when i let go
my voice echoes through the ghetto
sick of dumb people tryin'a pull
my strings like geppetto
this is my speech about my thoughts
what i've been through
and i hope you enjoy it
the crew and you

-Gerrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This flows from the intelligent heart of an up-and-coming laureate of the 150 Crew, and goes out to all of those who care to peruse the pages of The Beat, in search of poetry where mental wisdom and passionate heat compete on a single illustrated sheet replete with rhyme in hypertime, more than halfway up the arduous climb to total freedom, till nothing remains to be heard but the clarion call of the liberating word and its immanent manifestation in a twenty-first century American land where no one's a slave to a system apart but all stand in the heart of an American dream where God's providential scheme can be plainly seen.

**I only wish that this was a dream so someone
could pinch me and wake me up.**

What If

what if i told you
i hate the world
what if i told you
that i was scared to die
but ready to when i have to
what if i told you
my life is filled with
pain and rage
what if i told you
my life is a book
bad happens
damn near every page
trapped in this
ghetto cage
what if i told you
i need some space to roam
please tell society
i am ready to go back home
what if i told you
that i once held a pistol
to my head

but come to think
what kind of adventures can
i have
if i'm dead
listening to the goddamn
voices
now hearing clearer
able to make better choices
what if i told you
what if i told you
i'm seventeen
in the making

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew
From The Beat: Beautiful! What if we told you that we understand desperation, understand hearts overwhelmed with pain and frustration, understand despair and the intensity of your desire to get away from here? What if we told you the key is in your hand when you're able to make better choices and rise above self-destructive voices? Would you understand? What if we told you the fight begins in your mind? Do right, and you'll win, over time.

My Worst Experience Right Now

I think I'm going through my worst experience right now. It's not because of what my crime is, it's because . . . I don't know what I'm going to get. I hear good news, but then I hear bad, I hear bad news, and then I hear worse! Things aren't going to work out it seems.

I have to stop my mom's tears every time she comes and visits. I have to hear about my homeboy's death and face the fact that he's no longer physically here: I can't visit him! I can't pay my respects; I don't know what's going on!

I dream and pray that time on the outside slows down so when I get out it's the same as when I left. But I have to face reality — the only time that's slowing down is the time in here. Sometimes I got so much thoughts going through my mind I can't put them all together. So that's when the heat kicks in and that's when the anger starts boiling and that's when I get so mad that I feel vessels exploding in my eyes and I only shed tears of blood.

I only wish that this was a dream so someone could pinch me and wake me up.

-Chop, San Mateo

From The Beat: Wow. You just connected us with all of your emotions. We're sorry you're going through so much right now. Try not to trip, though; we all feel really bad at one time or another. The big difference is that we all deal with our emotions in different ways. How can you channel your emotions in a positive manner and in the right direction? Hint, writing is a good way and you're mighty fine at it!



Before I Let You Go

I wonder where the clouds go
when the horizon begins to rise
or what's awake around me
when I close my eyes
I wonder why in my subconsciousness
the devil tells me lies.
I'm not going to lie to myself
and say I don't know why I cry
because I do
there's no mystery to the pain I go through
it feels the same as the one in you.
A rose in a garden of death
a hidden diamond in a mountain's crest.
A little girl's hands
an elders experiences
as many tears as a beach's sands.
Hum a little melody
to render my soul
hoping that this God given talent
can be sold.
Longing to be held
in the arms of someone who will treat me like a queen
very few women
know what I mean
because "the perfect man"
is usually a dream.
It's okay though
if he exists
I'll search 'til I find him
once I'm done with all of this.
I must pursue my education
read all that I can
be all that I can
and never let myself get hit
by another man.
Put my back into it

I know if I want it, I can do it
opportunity awaits me
it's time to pursue it.
All around me
are people digging their grave
counting their last days
because they've been on one for days
lost souls
dying to be saved.
Hanging onto the streets
as if there's something to defend
I'm finally realizing it's not your friend
it's cold-hearted cement.
It has no love for you
and would never defend you
so why should I spend time on the block
when I have a home to go home to
as tha boys say
"That's what I ain't gon' do"
starting today
tomorrow's a new.
The light in the 'hood
the stars in the skies
the love in your mom's eyes
so to the streets
this is my version of goodbye.

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: Damn — this is powerful, full of individual lines that strike deeply and an overall meaning that reads like a primer for the realization that we wish so many could come to. Now that you're looking back at your love of the streets as something you're leaving behind, maybe you can help all of us understand more about how that relationship developed in the first place. From where did your love of the streets, and of your block, come? Why does anyone rep a piece of cement and blacktop over which they have no ownership? Looking forward, how are you going to take advantage of the opportunities that await? How are you preparing for the bad times along with the good, so that when they come you're not tempted to return to the streets? More than a goodbye, we see this as a greeting to a new way of life that you're about to start. We can't wait to see where this new journey takes you.

Until I Was Safely Asleep

I want to thank my mother for stickin' with me through my ups and down, don't matter what it was, feel me? That's why I respect her with the utmost respect and love her from the bottom of my heart.

And now I am just sittin' here thinkin' of all the pain I made you feel, and how I would stay out all night not really thinking about you and what you was doing. Feel me?

But if I'd would have went home, I would have knew the stress that I was makin' you feel and how you would not go to sleep until I was safely asleep and that's why I respect you so much. Your son,

-Lil' Molly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your momma sounds like a nice and caring lady. If you were released right now, how would you do things differently? How can you make up for lost time with your mother? Why don't you send her a copy of this tribute to her? It would put a smile on her face! Fa real!

Ball Like U Ball

Why is it that no one cares for the ones that don't have it all?
Ball like U ball.

How can you not see a little kid that's out on the streets,
sitting looking for a friend, someone to love?
Ball like U ball.

What about the little girl out there hoping and looking for love so she ran to the streets too, but only to hear how good she feels so she thinks that's what she needs.
Ball like U ball.

Then we have the no good dad that comes
and goes or never comes at all.
Ball like U ball.

But what about mom? She tries so hard to do what she can.
She's doing it all by herself without a man.
Ball like U ball.

So next time you see all this, don't keep going, stop and help.
But if you won't, don't worry, they made it this far.
Ball like U ball.

-D-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is some really deep, personal, advanced shhh! Sorry to cuss but on the real, you take the ball and run with it in this one. We hope you can use your experiences not to fuel your anger, resentment and justifying to do crime but instead use your experiences to fuel your motivation to change and help others not go through the same. This is what makes a man rich, rich in wisdom and compassion. If you do what you love for a living, you will never be poor.

**you would not go to sleep until I
was safely asleep and that's why
respect you so much.**



In My Eyes

If I wrote a speech
about the worst thing that happened to me
it would take a lifetime
to decide what it would be —
through all the smog
it's hard to see.
Let me choose one
out the raffle box
and think back to a time
where all hope was lost.
I remember my mom
always on one
trying to put the pipe in my mouth
yelling
"I love fun."
I remember how drunk she was that night
how her man told her I was getting older
and my body was tight
ten years old
and on the track that night.
Out there cold-ass hell
half-dead dopefiends
with stories to tell.
Looking at the stars
trying to hold back the tears
wishing I could be absorbed in their light
wishing I could be an angel
that night.
Cars honking
tricks knowing
not giving a damn that
a ten year old was ho'ing.
I kept trying to avoid the inevitable
as they followed me around
pimps hollering
"Lil' Mama — roll with me"
holding onto my backback
hoping there was a rocket in the back
so I could fly away
from this track.

What was I going to do?
My mom said "Ho up
or you won't have a place to go home to."
I remember closing my eyes
and shaking
God, please no! I'm a virgin
I'm only ten
don't let my life end!
At that moment God sent me a friend
my Uncle Beady
straight out the Pen.
He saved me
took me in
and sheltered me from the storm
put ice on my heart
when it was scorned.
Gave me money
so my moms wouldn't through me out
did it for six months
every night my mom
put me out.
I never thought I would see a brighter day
and I didn't for a long time
but God rescued me just in time
and my pain
I transfer into a rhyme
one of many speeches of mine . . .
through the eyes
of a life in crime.
(dedicated to my Uncle Beady, RIP)

-Pink, San Mateo

From The Beat: You say you don't know how you could choose just one bad experience to write about, but we don't want to imagine the others that are as bad as the one you document above. The question that springs to mind, and the one that we don't think could be answered well enough to satisfy us, is a mother — any mother — is doing putting her daughter on the track, let alone at ten years of age. We've said this to you many times before, but that you have the ability to write this is a clear sign of your strength. We know that Uncle Beady died just a few weeks ago, and it's clear that he was more than just family — he was literally a lifesaver. How have you managed to get to where you're at today, an intelligent young woman in the process of maturing, getting ready to return to the outs? Is there any way to turn this suffering into a source of motivation — the motivation to shine brightly on the outs, to complete the climb up and out of the hell you experienced?

I am bettering myself every day by reading, writing and learning a new word every day. The possibilities are endless.

I Shall Overcome

I was tired, intoxicated and surprised. I didn't expect this, I thought to myself as I was being led to the RU of YGC with the cold steel glistening off my wrist and cutting off my circulation.

"Crime doesn't pay," someone yelled as I entered the building with a cautious stride, not yet knowing what the system had in store for me, and that I was about to enter into one of the most corrupt and careless systems: Incarceration!

When I stepped into that box, it really struck me: I was trapped. I am still overcoming those experiences I have gone through for years in this system.

Rising above and beyond incarceration, I am freeing my mind and letting my imagination run free. This system won't bring me down! I am bettering myself every day by reading, writing and learning a new word every day. The

possibilities are endless. Just better yourself by knowing you can.

I am working on my emotions, dealing with them in better ways. The most important thing of all is that I am striving for a better future. I am still struggling, but I am picking up the puzzle of my life, and I am finally realizing that I can put it together by hard work and dedication.

I can overcome and I will.

-M. Reezy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is just a terrific piece of writing — so thoughtful, so real, and — best of all — so hopeful! It's one thing to see the system for the crippling experience it often is, but it's an altogether different thing to let that realization be the starting point for self-evaluation, self-correction and self-improvement. In truth, we are all struggling to get along with our families, to make a living, to improve our lives and the lives of our children, to avoid hurting people, etc. And, as with all struggles, the most important weapon you bring to it is your mind. What makes us most proud of you — and gives us confidence that you will succeed — is the wonderful determination you bring to that simple but difficult statement, "The system won't bring me down!"



R Lifestyle

Do people know what is pain?
How about when people use drugs to waste their veins? In
my life I have people in tears
and people who are stuck with fear
My family is all that put together — even me
but I hold it in my heart
'cause I know that it can really break me apart
People look at my face and ask me why don't I smile
I say why, for what?
Life is full of pain
nothing ever good happens to me
They look into my eyes and they tell me
"I can see that you been through a lot"
I start to trip 'cause I say
"How can you see that?"
When I look at myself all I see is a dead soul
and spirit that is trying to come back
My life I grew up wit' violence around me
my dad was never there for me
always beat my mom
stole money for drugs
he almost killed her
he been in jail back and forth
my mom told me
When I saw her cry
I would hug her and tell her
"I'll take care of you when I grow up" —
now I'm the screw up
hurting my mom
wasting my family money
I always tried my hardest to be the best
then I end up turning in the wrong street
Me, the way I handle my pain
is I hide it in my heart
people would look in my eyes and tell me
"Damn, you been through a lot of pain"
I be like "What?"
Me, when I see myself

I see a lost dead soul and spirit
I tell myself I got no life
nothing ever good ever happens to me
I fear no person or death
I learned a lot through all this
but I still believe there's no life for me
no love, no happiness, no goals
While I'm stuck here I try to set myself some goals
I pray every day
because I can serve my max time — 25 years
I used to trip off it
but now no more 'cause I got nothing out there
I never had someone who actually cared
what happens to me
some of my family members don't want me around them or
my cousin
but I'm use to being at places I'm not wanted
So that's why I look to my other's family (the 'hood)
who understands me and loves me
I ain't got much to say
that's just the beginning
there's more, but personal — feel me
That's pain
when you had your whole life beat up
and put in the dust
and left in it
That's why I pray to God to lend me a hand
to show me a new life
My life is a lesson to learn
'cause I'm going to be a good man
and not let my children have a life like mines.

-Spooky, San Mateo

From The Beat: Man, Spooky — you let it out in this piece, and we suspect that there's way more where this came from. You're not worthless — if only through your words that you write for The Beat, we see a young man using his writing to understand himself better, and others reading your pieces can take them as cautionary tales, lessons about where the life can take them. Having said that, this is an extraordinarily painful piece to read — we feel the agony you feel. What would it take to make sure that your children don't have a life like yours?

Crack Baby

The worst thing I ever experienced was finding out I was addicted to crack cocaine when I was born.

I found out when I was at placement, about three or four years ago. I was in a meeting with my uncle and the person who ran the placement. The woman asked why I act the way I do. Then my uncle started talking about how my mom did drugs.

I was old enough to understand. When I heard him say it, I started thinking that everything that was happening to me was her fault.

I was taken away from my mom when I was six months old. I was placed in a foster home. In about 1994, I was placed back with my mom. After a little while, my mom got caught up doing drugs again, and I was taken away.

From then on, all of her rights to take care of me were terminated.

I was placed in a group home after group home and foster home after foster home.

I was placed on all kinds of medicines. All they did was make me fat. Sometimes I refused them. When I did, doctors always thought I had an anger problem. I never understood

why every time I got mad or sad, they said I had an anger problem or I was depressed. Then, when I stopped talking, because I thought that was what was getting me in trouble, for they said I had social problems, when — I talked more than anyone they knew.

When I saw my mom about a year ago, I asked her about her and her drug problem. I asked her why she used drugs. She said because she was addicted. That answer for some reason made me mad, until this day. That answer wasn't the real one. I felt like she wasn't trying to tell me the real answer. This was my worst experience ever.

PS Thank you, Beat, for bringing up this topic. I needed to get that out of my system. You may never know how much it helped.

-Afro Sly, Marin

From The Beat: Heartfelt writing. What do you think is the real reason that your mom used drugs? If she lost custody of you because of drugs, the reason she uses them must be hugely powerful in her life. Do you think maybe something so bad happened to your mom that she doesn't want to worry you about it, and that's why she doesn't want to tell you everything? If she doesn't have the strength or courage to tell you the truth, can you still feel close to her, try to understand her, and forgive her? Even at your young age, you may have to be the strong one in your family, which may not be fair. Can you help your mom in any way? Maybe by listening to her? Beautiful, insightful, well-written, sad essay!



My Speech

I had a dream...

That I lost my father at the age of seven.

That my mom remarried and I moved to a military base in New Mexico with my step dad as the newest edition to the family.

That six months later, we moved back to California and moved to a condo in Novato, in Marin County.

That we moved to a house in Novato, after my baby sister was born.

That I learned how to shoot a BB gun in Washington State.

That I used that knowledge to shoot someone with that same BB gun, to earn my first and only charge: felony assault with a deadly weapon, October 2, 2000.

That I was in Juvy for three weeks.

That I returned two years later for violation of probation for one week.

That I returned again six months later for violation of probation for seventeen days.

That I came back again in February, 2004, for violation of probation for one month.

That I accessed my biological father's telephone number and eventually met him.

That I stayed with him or the weekend and for the first time in ten years, felt like I had a dad.

That I came back again for violation of probation and my PO said he wouldn't release me 'til July 24th, my eighteenth birthday.

It wasn't a dream... it's reality!

-Tim, Marin

From The Beat: Something is wrong if you keep sabotaging your freedom and your life over and over. Do you know what it is? Are you still in touch with your dad? What do you like to do on the outs that's legal? Do you like school? Do you want to have a job? Do you like to play sports? What can you do to make sure that after you're free again and are an adult, you won't be getting in any more trouble?

What's Painful?

I've been through a lot of bad things in my life

Like almost being killed with a knife

But nothing as bad as what I'm going to say

I remember it 'til this day

My grandpa passed away

It was a sad day

He died of a liver disease

I seen my grandma down on her knees

Asking God why'd He take him

Knowing his drinking problem was a sin

I went to his wake drunk

When I saw him in his coffin

My heart sunk

The day of his funeral

A lot of people came

They cried as they put him in his grave

I wiped my face and felt no tears

I asked myself, "Is crying a fear?"

'Til this day I don't know why

I couldn't cry

Did I even try?

Or was I just shy?

That's the most painful experience I've felt

More painful than a whipping with a belt

-Kase LCRS

From The Beat: There's no proper way to mourn. Sometimes people cry inside, but can't cry outside, do you know that feeling? Maybe you couldn't cry at your grandpa's funeral because there were all those people around you. Some people can only reveal their emotions when they're alone. You know how you feel about your grandpa, that's what really matters. We're sorry about your loss. He's only left you in the physical state. His soul lives on through you forever.

**But in the end I'm going to take the negative and use it as a positive.
I have learned to discipline myself. I've learned to control my anger
and when and how to use my leadership skills.**

Saying My Goodbyes

It's about time I'm leaving. I've been here for so long — nine and a half months is too long. May 7th I'm out! But it's not like I wanna stay here, 'cause I don't. It's that I'm going to miss the staff. I'm going to miss all the things that I have learned and gained here.

I've gotten so much advice from so many of these staff. They grew on me and I know I grew on them.

I'm only too happy to leave this negative environment. I'm tired of all these girls and being told what to do. But in the end I'm going to take the negative and use it as a positive. I have learned to discipline myself. I've learned to control my anger and when and how to use my leadership skills.

I have learned and gained a lot from this experience. I have really grown up. I've gotten my education and I'm enrolled in college. I plan to do big things with the knowledge I've received.

By reading The Beat so long, and even before this time being captured, I realize that I'm in the wrong.

My favorite Beat writers are Wardog and The Poetic Prisoner. I've learned so much by Wardog. All his experiences he shares and there's always a message. I've heard it if some haven't. Poetic Prisoner — I've had the pleasure of meeting you. You write so deep. I hear your messages, too.

I wanna thank Matt and Merv for coming to this Hall and letting us express ourselves in a way that will mean something.

To my staff: Mr. Saadat, much love to you. You keep my head up. Thanks for all the help and advice. To Mr. Brown: thanks for the encouragement and always boosting my confidence. Thanks for the respect. Mr. Chow, ya know I got ta shout out — ya the folks. Thanks for giving advice; even if I didn't wanna hear you, ya know I got mad respect. Ms. Dungca, I'm going to miss you so much. Thanks for all the support. Ms. Reed, man you know. Thanks for supporting me when I wanted to do things for the unit.

And to the one and only Big Swiss: I love you. I'm going to miss you so much. Thanks for being there for me and all the things you did. Keep spreading the love, my sister.

To all the other staff — Mr. D, Ms. K, Ms. Mendoza, Mr. Prince, Mr. Mitchell — much love and respect. You guys have made a difference. Ha ha.

-Aok, San Mateo

From The Beat: Thanks for the props — it's been amazing to watch you grow through the times you've been back and forth to the Hall, and we know that you've got what it takes to shine on the outs. You're going to thrive in college — the curiosity and ability you brought to our workshops are the skills, when combined with diligence, that are going to make you a great student. We're going to miss your participation and your smile in Hillcrest, and we hope you're able to find your way up to the city so that you can drop by our office sometime.



From The Beat: The following are writings from a father to his son. We deeply appreciate his sharing what Keek's dad wrote to him. Their relationship is amazing. It is a relationship so many dream of — a father who is reforming himself and the son, again, following his footsteps, this time to a better path. We hope other sons will not wait for their fathers but instead find the strength to break the cycle for their own children or future children, their families, loved ones and themselves. Life is too short.

#2 Piece by Pops

The way I feel dredging through these days.
My mind is all a blur, a constant haze.
For me to describe how I feel in my heart and soul,
Suppressing something, yet enjoying others is taking its toll.
Walking in my shoes is like playing the blues.
It's such a sweet sorrow, knowing we'll see tomorrow.
We'll get through this one just as the last,
Looking for our future, forgetting all of our past.
A lot of haters try to put barriers in our path,
Usually they learn to see it our way, or reap the wrath.
Because of the strong blood that runs through our veins,
We live our lives, riding head an' holdin' the reins.
No matter how we get through another shhh-y day,
We must sit with the Lord to talk and pray.
We'll ask him to keep our loved ones safe and out of harms way,
So that peacefully we can rest, when our heads we lay.

-Diablo/Keek's Dad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You express yourself so well, Diablo. This is a talent we can see your son has too. Expression and communication are beautiful and can prevent so many problems in life. If someone is locked up, it leaves mostly writing as a way to communicate. Verbal communication is important too in any family as well as faith and lots of work and support. We are very excited about your family's future. Your family is an inspiration and gives us hope.

#1 Piece By Pops

For a child to hear, "I won't be coming to see you next visiting day," has got to be tearing a piece of your soul away. Think what it feels like to us, "Mom, Dad I got locked up today." Some parents ask "Why? What did you do?" "How much is it gonna cost me?"

All you want to hear is, "Are you okay? Everything will be fine, you'll see!" Moms and Pops are worried about being embarrassed by the things that their children have done. As a child, to know mis heftos (parents) were ashamed of me I'd turn and far away, I would run.

For a child to hear the judge say, "Six years CYA," Has got to feel like he took your life, your fun, your family and friends from you. For a parent to hear the judge say, "Six years CYA," feels like "Dear Lord, why take my son away from me? Haven't I done right by you?"

You say "Mom, Dad, I'm ready to go home. I don't want to be here any more."

We say for you to be home safe with us is all we pray for. You say, "Mom, Dad, I'm sorry, I love you."

We say Mijo (son), "I'm sorry I love you."

-Diablo/Keek's Dad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel the heartbreak of your parents in your father's dialogue and writing. A parents' pain for a child is unbearable, but love and faith brings you all together, even through the concrete walls and distance. Love and faith are powerful and extraordinary. We wish you and your family the best. Again, thank you for sharing this with us.

#3 Piece By Pops

Getting through my day is never what it seems,
I'm warding off enemies, be it single or in teams.
The worse part of my week seems to be the best,
'cause when I sit with my boy, I forget all the rest.
I gotta walk through a machine to see if a fileto (file)
or cuete (knife) is what they detect.
Some staff talk a lot of shhh, with their jaw I want to connect.
But if I don't refrain, it's all bad for my son.
God! I wanna reach out and show'em I ain't the one.
All the BS seems to float away once I hit unit three,
Now I'm with mi hijo (my son)
and nothing else matters to me.
It's time to muster all my strength
and use all my powers,
For we've exhausted our few measly little hours.
I hug and kiss you, tell you goodbye,
feels as though my heart has fell,
I'm goin' home while you stay in that little ass closet,
they call a cell.
I hit the sto' fo' a twenty-four of Mickey's
to make my head a little light,
One good twist and now I can stroll,
eyes red and shut tight.

-Diablo/Keek's Dad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your account of that "special" visit before your son goes to CYA, is heart wrenching and full of love. You want to protect your son and you did the right thing by keeping your cool. Your good example is the best protection and teaching you can give to Keek. Right on, Diablo. A little buzz can help ease the pain but it's still there. We hope your family can pull together and give each other lasting comfort. Much love.

#4 Piece By Pops

I'm searching, asking and begging,
but I still can't find the freaking answer,
I feel like I did cuando mi abuelito
(when my grandfather) was dying of cancer.
I can't do anything to lift your spirits,
to take away the pain,
all my laughing and joking brings a little smile,
even that you strain.

I look and see your life's a puzzle,
you must build piece by piece,
I'm here to help in any way,
today and far past the day of your release.
It's 10:30 pm.

I lookup and examine the stars in the sky,
my alarm tells me it's time for our conference with the
"Big Guy".

We finish our praying and I know, it's time for bed,
they tell you, you must go,
pero mijo (my son), remember you're their's for a little while,
but you're always my Kiko.

These are all for Kiko "Keek" by Marcus "Diablo".
Son and father.

-Diablo/Keek's Dad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your support is crucial and your admitting that you are powerless over your son's situation is also important. A writer told us once that the world's problems (or your son's problems) feels like an ocean and you may feel like you only have a teaspoon to help out. Figure out how to make that teaspoon a ladle and leave the rest of the ocean up to God. Please believe that your willingness to change the old ways, and your helping hand, love and presence is more than enough.



A Speech About Losing My Brother

The last phone call that changed my fam's life forever.

Here it is, it goes down late Chicago. I was in the windy city. The air was cold, my brother and mother were tired. I was riding with my cousin around the city of Chi-town.

Here it gets horrifying, I received a phone call from my big sister. She's screaming, crying and murmuring. I say, "What's up sist', cool the hell down you stressing me out."

She slowly calms down and start' to tell me her story. She say in a voice of death, "Your brother just got killed. Shot five times in the body and one time in the head." I stopped myself. My cous' pulls the car over. I looked into the mirror and saw my soul disappear from my eyes. I start' to frown in rage. My eyes turn a glittery red, like I had died and went to hell. My brother was murdered by his ex-girlfriend. She supposedly said she was protecting herself from my eldest brother, Jamal.

My heart literally stopped for a second and I start' to throw my guts up. Suddenly I stop'. The life came back to my eyes and I turned peaceful and start' to call back my sister that I hung up on in disbelief of the story.

I say, "Sis, what exactly happen'?"

She tell me, "Let's start up the funeral plans."

A few day' later, the funeral's set and we mourn in peace. It's time for us to get the family back together. I said loudly at the funeral. Them years to come, my family has been closer than ever. Peace out.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell the story about the news of your brother's death so vividly that we felt the pain, surprise and sadness you felt. You are a very open and expressive young man. We would like to know how you coped (still coping) with your loss and how your anger plays a big part in your life now. How can you work through this anger and not let it consume you and hurt others? Death sometimes tears a family apart but your family is strong and open to each other. It seems that it still tears you apart in ways though. We wish you peace, Jeremy. Our condolences to you and your family.

Down

What brings me down is when me an' my mother talk about my stepfather and how he was killed. It brings me down because he was a good guy and did nothing to nobody at all.

When he died it was the worst thing that happened to my family. That's when I started comin' to jail, getting into trouble a lot, stopped going to school, started smokin' weed, selling drugs, hanging with the wrong crowd, comin' in an' out of jail and putting my mother through a lot.

I want to say I am sorry for all the things I put you through the past year. I love you mom.

-Taylor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Our deepest condolences to you for the loss of your father. How can you make things better for your mother and yourself? You know, your father only left you physically; he still lives within you spiritually and still watches you from behind the clouds. How can you make his soul dance up in heaven?

I'm Finally 'Bout to Leave

Whadizit, Beat Within? This: Markie-bo, and this is my last time writing to The Beat. I'm getting released on Thursday, April twenty-ninth, so I won't be here to read my last writing piece or those of you others.

Before I go, I want to holla at everybody that writes and reads this last piece I'm writing for The Beat. Everybody that got dreams and goals they wanna follow — keep striving for success, and make it to the top! And to all my enemies, remember: if you keep hating, hate will come back to you.

And to Broken Glass, keep writing! You just don't know how much you touched me with some of your writing. I wish I could meet you one day to tell you, but even if I don't — I want to tell you right now that I like your writing! And if I get married one day, I hope I can have a wife that's smart like you, so I won't be the only one giving my children some game.

But anyways, I'm out. So I'll holla!

-Markie-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd love to read about how you're handling your freedom this time! Will you leave that so-called easy money behind, quit the grind, and avoid returning to the Hall to do more time? That's the game you need to be trying to win, young friend.

My Worst Experiences

One of my worst experience' is when I was a kid about seven years old. This man came up to when I was at a temple. He asked to see my balls. I said no. Then I tried to run but he grab' me. This was in the back. He pulled down my pants and grab' my balls. He was Cambodian too. That's all he did and told me if I tell anyone, he would kill me. What I did was I forgot about it, until I remember weeks ago when I was in jail. He didn't rape me or nothing that way, and I never saw him again. But it don't bother me.

My dad told me a year ago, "Don't try to play football, you are not going to make it." Then my head was like, "you never even saw me play. What kind of dad would have no confidence for your son?"

If that was me, I would been like, "Son, come let's work out really hard so you could get super strong and super fast so you could dominate." And ask him what he need to buy for his workout equipment. What I did was like think, this is not my dad, even though I hated him before that. I just said I'm' prove him wrong in the future and keep on workin' at it really hard.

My other embarrassing thing, I don't even want to talk about it. I'm just gonna hurt him and it was no fight. That was my worst experience. It was the one I don't wanna tell.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All that happened to you really makes us mad — mad at the man who abused you that one time, mad at your father projecting his insecurities on you, and mad that something so bad happened, you don't want to write about it. We are mad and all this didn't even happen to us. That's the main thing, Jeremy, what will you do with all the anger you have about all this? How can you not carry all the burden people threw on you and spread it to others and resort to revenge? Here's a quote to contemplate. It's from one of the wisest man who ever lived, Ghandi, "An eye for an eye, leaves the whole world blind." We want to thank you for having the guts to share all this with The Beat readers. We know many of them have had similar experiences and this may inspire them to speak about it or at least not feel alone about it.

The Seduction

The mainstream

It brings to life a feeling of flaming hostility

Open a magazine

Turn on the TV

Ride down the road

And I see the ignorance of its faithful followers

Mimicking the actions and reactions of those portrayed as modern messiahs

The leaders of the new world (and the old)

Drained the originality from the minds of those who

seek answers with ease

Intentions are cloaked

Decisions are pre-formed

And I'm left standing in a world of Black and White

Though I fight for freedom —

With ink

And I'm losing

I hate

I try

And I die

-Brixx, Virginia

From The Beat: You are a great writer of truth and how you see the world. Your lines are amazing and original. The world is so much bigger than us but everything we do has a ripple effect. It may feel like you're losing but every little thing you think, do, say, and write or NOT think, do say and write, makes a world of difference. We are glad that you can see the media for what it really is. So many are blind to the other untold side. Remember though,



Confessions Of A Damaged Mind

Damage, damage
What is the mind?
Sparks in my mind
Can't think, can't blink
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
What should I do?
Find my friends
Go to the park
Times passes me by
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
I am hungry from
All the smoking weed
I see a store
Walking and walking
It is so far
Wait, what am I doing?
I think I was walking home
To sleep
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
Wait, I am hungry
The sun is shining
In my eyes
It is hot out here
I need water
Far from it

I feel like someone
Is looking at me
No one is around
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
My mind is not high anymore
Smoke another bowl
Powf, powf, powf
The smoke smells
So good right now
Light up a cigarette
And take a powf
Get higher
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
Cool! I'm at home
So high! So high!
I'm tired
Good night
Sleeping and
Sleeping
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
Wake up, I'm starving
Eat up
Lots of food around
Light up a cigarette
Drugs are in my pocket
Let me smoke another bowl
Right now
Feeling really numb

Can't read or write
No more
Can't feel or think
I have no pain
My mind is dead
Stupid is crawling on me
Drugs, what are you doing to me?
No one likes me
Heat is all around
Me and you
Oh! It is night
Already?
Tomorrow is another day
To get high
My mind is not
With me any more
Oh, well
I'm going to my bed
And sleep
Good night!

-Snake, Marin

From The Beat: Sick poem! It has many levels. Sometimes it's sad, sometimes funny, and other times resigned. How are you managing in Juvy without drugs now? It sounds like your whole life revolves around drugs on the outs. What would your life be like without drugs on the outs? What other passions do you have besides getting high? Can you build a life without drugs? Good luck.

One Cold Sound

It brings me down
With those cuffs around
My wrists
And my fists
Ball up so tight
And I feel that fight
Rise up in my throat
And I start to choke
I just won't go
Back to a cell
This life is hell
Livin' in jail
And it brings me down
Hearin' the sound
Of the lock
It won't stop
Playin' in my mind
One cold sound
Frozen in time
And it brings me down
Bein' shot down
Always fallin' down
From the highest peak
Life seems so bleak
And I seek relief
In my hours of grief
It really brings me down

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: You describe life in Juvy very poignantly. Often, when you write, you're so wise. What are you doing up in Juvy? Is something really wrong in your life? If so, how can you get help? Or did you just mess up once, and you've learned from being in Juvy, so you won't be back? Good luck!

The Worst Experience

The worst experience that I had was being raped.

At the age of six years old, I was homeless and lived in a shelter. The lady was twenty-seven. I don't remember her name, but she took me to her dormitory and started touching and kissing me, sliding off my clothes. She started having sex with me and when she finished, I ran and told my mom.

She got upset and tried to kill the lady with a shotgun, a sawed off. But my dad stopped her and called the police.

-Steven, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh man, Steven! What a terrible experience. You must not have even understood what was happening to you since you were so young. We're so glad you were able to tell your parents — sometimes kids just hold that kind of thing in. What was the worst part about this experience? Did the way your parents react upset you? Has this experience affected the kind of person you are today?

In A Better Place

Damn, it's just like we was at the group home doing hella shhh. Going on outings, seeing who can pop up at the baddest chick.

We was both in a city that we did not know. We would come back from the town and you would say, "T-Maine, I know it's time to blow." We would go to the rec room and blow so much purple. When I would want to run, you would tell me to stay because that was the best thing for me. You would say how you can't wait till you pimp this shhh so you could go back to the park and get stupid lit.

The day that I left, you gave me a hug and a playful slap on the face. I told you, you better pimp this shhh. Don't run and get a warrant 'cause you will get caught hella quick. I kept tryin' to call to check up on you. Then staff said you ran and I thought to myself, what a damn fool.

Then a couple of months later, somebody told me something that I did not want to hear. They told me that you was gone and it was not a place that you called home. They said that you were in a car with some friends and you ran into a tree. I keep asking myself, how dumb could the driver be? I just keep telling myself that you are in a better place, smiling down on me, thinking about all the good times that we had and even laughing wit' me. So till I see you again, RIP Chris, you will be missed but never forgot.

-Tramaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a beautiful tribute to your friend. When our loved ones pass, all we really have is our memories. Sometimes there is no way to explain death, we just have to accept it and take it as it is. What are you going to miss most about Chris? Do you think that he lived a happy life? Did his life teach you anything? Can you use his death and his hopes of you staying out of the system to motivate you to change whatever keeps sending you to placements and bringing you back to the Hall?



Pain Brings Me Down

What brings me down? I would have to say — pain! That's the only thing that really brings me down.

Even when I try to hold my pain inside, it brings me down, because I know in my heart that I am truly in pain. Like over the past couple of years — close, close friends have passed away, and I have felt very much in pain!

Pain is something that haunts you, day in and day out. You can't share pain. You can't run from pain. If you try to run from pain, you won't get anywhere. Pain is one of the most excruciating experiences to have to go through in the world of the living.

perpetrating not to feel it
attitude changes
when you keep the pain
to yourself
inside your heart
is where you hide the pain
now can you let it all out
and still be the same

-Corn-freaky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A teacher in recovery (who wrote "Physician, Heal Thyself" in the AA Big Book) used to say to those who sought his help, "I wish you pain!" And then he would explain, "In my life, I would never change until I could no longer stand the pain of not changing." Dr. Earle is no longer with us, but his words still ring true. Why don't you make your pain work for you? Don't continue to do what brings you pain — change!

From experience, I know there's certain times that telling is okay.

My Mom's Battle

The worst thing I have ever gon' through is watching my mother battle cancer. The way I overcame this situation was by creating an even stronger bond with her so that in the event that something did happen, I would have no regrets. This way no matter what the future brought, my memories and experiences with her would live forever.

-Alex B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Man, Alex, that is a difficult experience, and it sounds like you made excellent choices about how to make the best of the situation. Is your mom still struggling, or did she recover? With that kind of clear thinking, what brings you to the Hall?

Speaking From Experience

From experience, I know there's certain times that telling is okay. If somebody's life is endangered, then it's your responsibility to be the bigger person to tell somebody.

When I was in my county, my friend who had HIV got arrested, telling me how her PO was threatening her with the "CYA." She was very depressed; I was worried. Her room was straight across from me.

That night I looked across the hall and she was messing with her light and a sheet. I got scared and rang my buzzer, but the staff thought I was playing. They came around to do a room check and come to find out she hung herself. It hurt because my friend was gone but I felt good about myself that I took the responsibility to try to help a friend.

-Jessica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a tragic situation, Jessica. That certainly was a time when telling was the right thing to do. How sad and irresponsible that no one answered your call. Did you ever try to take it farther? We're so sorry you weren't able to save your friend's life, but you did the best you could. You really took responsibility in that situation. You are a true friend.

Lost In A Dark Hole

I'm lost in my emotions,
My stress, my pain, my tears,
I feel like a locked up cheetah,
Being up in here,
Nowhere to run, walk or breathe,
I try to stay included,
But then I feel like I'm losing my mind,
I never stressed this much being locked up in past times,

I'm lost in my emotions,
Because they rise, then they fall,
Joy, sadness, and agony is what I feel all at once,
I wish I could smoke a fat purple blunt,
I stress for many reasons,
And for a long amount of time,
I be so lost, what I look for I can't seem to find,
I compare myself to a cheetah,
Because I like to run cross-country,
I feel like I'm going crazy, something like a monkey,
I get so lost in my thought,
To the point that it's hard to breathe,
I look at myself in my mirror and ask
"What's happening to me?"

I used to see a sexy, caramel piece
Now all I see is darkness, hate, and envy,
Females talk shhh, and that really don't help,

I don't take it personal,
'Cause it don't affect my wealth,
I try to have fun,
But it seems like that's a mission,
So when people laugh,
All I do is be wishin',

That one day I'll be happy and not trip off dis shhh,
Before I go crazy and start to freakin' flip,
I guess I'll bring this to an end,
'Cause I have too much to say,
Hopefully tomorrow will be a brighter day,

-Lil' Mama, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a really nice style of writing, we feel you. You make it easy to feel what you're going through. When you look in the mirror and ask yourself that question, what is your conclusion? What is happening to you? Who and what are you envious of and hateful towards? Why so you think you are stressing so much this time in the Hall? Do you think you can use this stress to keep yourself from getting locked up again? Use this time to make plans for a system-free life. Tomorrow will be a brighter day, keep your head up Lil' Mama.

Help Me

Oh God, how it feels to be locked up.
Sometimes you just want to scream.
You want to burst into tears and scream as loud as you can.
Oh God help me!
Help me, where I can do well and never come back here.
Oh God! So many things happen so, so many bad things.
Oh God help me! Where I could get out of here, do well and go to school.
Give me peace.
When you cry it's like rain.
Keep your head up.

-Danielle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This prayer really reaches out. Sometimes it takes asking God for help in order to give us the strength it takes to handle the our problems. Keep YOUR head up. Scream if you have to scream; it'll help you find the strength. We have faith in YOU.



Feel Me

seems my life
has passed fast
losin' to takin'
snakin' to thinkin'
it ain't gon' last
i laugh out loud
but really hurtin'
deep down inside
feeling vibes
of the aches i cry
it's the devil in disguise
in my eyes
i wonder why
this grime
chose my side
i didn't invite
this stranger
to come an' ruin my life
but i gotta keep it tight
turn around
keep movin'
till i get it right
'cause this person
ain't gon' push me
an' have me fall off twice
i know i'm betta than that
that's why i gotta stay
ahead of this cat
so many people trippin'
i'm knowin'
who's bound to slip next
i flexed
before i hit the ground
i caught myself
maybe i was expecting
worse before anything else
i pulled so many things my way
it tugged war back to me
but i'm still standin'
through it all on my feet
can't get caught about bein' weak
i'm gon' stay strong
no matter what's wrong
feel me
peace

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The devil in disguise is someone with a mouth full of sweet lies, trying to make you compromise what you know is right and have you doing what you know is wrong; 'cause the song is so sweet it makes night like day and broken glass sparkle like a diamond on display. But once you've been cut and left alone with the pain, you know in your gut it was insane. And words that once sounded sweet are now dirt under your feet, as you walk by fast, free at last, clean of the past and its grime — 'cause it never was part of your natural mind!

"Snitching" - I Hate That Word!

"Telling the truth" it should be called. When necessary, it's alright to be told on, although nobody wants to be snitched on. But in certain situations like life or death, when you've been violated of your womanhood or manhood, it's perfectly fine to tell someone. People who are dirty enough to do shhh like that shouldn't be able to be in society anyway.

When I was raped, I didn't tell anyone until I got caught up by the cops. When I did, I felt so much better. A huge barrier was lifted off my shoulders. But when he got caught and was threatening me and my family's life, I was regretting what I did. But as time progressed I said "Shhh happens" and that punk deserved what he got!

So I'm telling you all this to let it be known that petty shhh should be handled in another way. But when it's a messy situation, then do what you must do!

-Ginger, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your definition of "snitching" is more broad than that of so many others who chose to write on this topic, and we're glad that you expanded our view. Many women who go through the same experience you did keep their rape secret instead of telling and letting others help them through their pain. Why did you keep your rape secret until you were picked up? What would you say to the other Beat readers who may have been through a similar experience?

What Brings Me Down

Everyday, I wake up in the morning. I don't want to wake up, but I have no choice. I get up at seven in the morning and ask someone for a ride to YTEC. If I can't get a ride in two minutes, I just leave so I can be at school on time.

When I get to YTEC, it's nothing because everyone in here is funny and they crack me up. YTEC is my life now. If I don't pass this program, I'm going to be in here forever. They gave everyone six months. If you screw-up, they lock you up and make it nine months for your behind.

What else brings me down? If I hear, or see, my parents crying because they are sick, I really get worried because they both are getting old and I just be trippin' off that kind of stuff. Yeah!!! I hope I make it to piece of the week.

-Phu YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you got your priorities straight! Remember that you could be in YTEC for hella long, or you can just do your time, get out, and never come back. Also, remember the words that you wrote for The Beat in this piece and always practice it. If you really worry about your parents, you'll be there physically to help them out, right?

You Brought Me Down. Can You Bring Me Up?

I was given life by you
you told me I was worthless and a fool
If I was worthless
then it's your mistake
Screams and shouts
that's all you were about
What you say is old
say something new
yeah, so what if I'm always out
that's 'cause I got love for my crew
When will you ever
show me some love
something like, "I love you son"
or even a hug?

-Six, San Mateo

From The Beat: The cry here is so specific and clear. Why do you think the hug hasn't been there? How can you make sure that the love you seek isn't provided in ways — or by people — who bring you down? Clearly, you deserve the love you seek, but how can you overcome its absence?

After the Pain

i wanted to cry yesterday
but i couldn't
the pain that was pondering
said i wouldn't
my heart is so sore
that i can't feel it anymore
i sit on my bed and listen to the beat
wondering next time i talk
what words will i speak
truly feeling weak
sometimes i just lay up and think
and all the aches sink
it'll all be over when
i'm not topped with pink
i'll be able to live my life
as beautiful as i can be
after the pain

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say, when girls go to YA, it's not as long as on the boys' side; and when they return for evaluation, they're rarely sent back to the Y. Maybe it doesn't really help to know this when you're doing the time, and every day stretches farther than the heart can find an end to, till you're heartsore through and through. But the heart is full of miracles, too! And your poetry shows you can see all the way to that beautiful day after the pain of has faded away.

**I was given life by you
you told me I was
worthless and a fool**



To My Folks

"Keep y'all heads up and let's ride this out!"
I'm sittin' in this room
Not even stressin'
Because of y'all
I ain't trippin' about the pain I'm going through
I'm lettin' my time go by, day by day
Feelin' coo',
Feeling patient,
Being okay
I got both of you to talk to
Without worrying about y'all judgementing me
I could say what's on my mind
Because both your responses are always kind
Yeah, it's hard to believe that I just met y'all
but people like y'all are hard to find
I know that because every person
That I talk to seems so fake
But you two,
Y'all the type that'll offer me a piece of y'all cake
I like to bring a smile to y'all faces
'Cause y'all do the same for me
I'm lettin' y'all know how I feel
'Cause y'all two are the only people
That keeps it real.
(dedicated to Young Gino and Estrella)

-Jazze GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Looks like you found a couple of good friends, and good friends are hard to come by so don't let them go.

Don't So This

If I could write a speech, I would write a speech about how I let a dude take me over. How I let a dude take every ounce of respect I had for myself, my self-esteem, everything I ever dreamed. Now I'm in the purple and beige.

I don't need no dude to validate me, especially when he disrespects me, and puts his hands on me.

Girls think it's cute when a ninja puts their hands on them, but it ain't cute.

-Staria GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: No, a man beating a woman is not cute, and we're happy to hear that you've realized this. How sad that we can mistake abuse for love — they're never the same.

Vision

Incarcerated for what I did in the past.
Sittin' in my cell waitin' for the time to pass.
Sittin' on my bunk reminiscing,
wish that instead of this, family is what I could be clenchin'
I'm tired of wishin' for what I want in my life.
So I decided to not let this time cut me like a knife.
Forget the wish, I will soon have a good life.
Only time could tell when freedom reaches me.
I won't take it for granted, but cherish it for eternity.

-Shane, San Mateo

From The Beat: Sounds like you're choosing a more positive way to live your life. Do you think this may be the reason you're sitting on that bunk right now? What can you do to make sure your freedom isn't taken away from you ever again?

Letter To My Unborn

This goes out to my son or daughter
I'm wonderin' if I'll be a great father
'Cause when I grew up I never won
Only my mom was calling me son
My father was either locked up or on the street
He walked out when I was about three
Left my mom to raise me and my brother
She's the best mom, I wouldn't choose any other
When my father left, we were basically homeless
So I question why was my father doin' this
So when I have children I'm goin to be a great father
Have my little son fitted out like a baller
And treat my wife like a princess, and same with my daughter
So they can have a husband and a father.

-Peanut Head, San Mateo

From The Beat: To be a great husband and father, you don't need to treat your wife and daughter like princesses — just respect them as you want to be respected. That's the lesson your father apparently didn't understand, and you're paying the price. The past can't be changed, but it can help guide you to a better future. We think you'll make a fine father, but we hope you put that responsibility off for a while because fatherhood requires a 100% commitment to be successful.

Somebody Lied To Me, Man

Like my PO, because my PO
Told me I was going to court Tuesday
Somebody lied to me, man
Somebody told me I was nothing
Somebody lied to me, man
Somebody told me I was hoe
Somebody lied to me, man
Somebody told me I was dumb as hell
Somebody lied to me, man

-Deshay GU, SF/YGC

From the Beat: Good writing, Deshay, your anger jumps off the page. And, you're right, someone did lie to you, because you are not any of those things, you are a beautiful, charismatic young lady who deserves all the good things in life.

When Homeboy Got Shot

Well, the worst thing that I've experienced was when my homeboy died. It's bad because I was with him when everything happened.

I don't think I will ever be able to forget the day. Everything happened at a quinceañera. All of my homeboys wanted to go there because we wanted to have some fun, and everything ended up bad because two of my homeboys got shot. One passed away, and the other was in the hospital for two days because he got shot two times in the arm.

I was shocked when the cops told me my homeboy Chente had passed away. I was mad, but at the same time I was sad because he was not with us no more.

We all loved him. He was like our brother, always telling us to keep our heads up during bad times. So now that he passed away, we all got to keep our heads up. There is a lot of things I would like to tell him, but I will when I see him in heaven. RIP Kemeloks.

In loving memory of Vicente Mendoza, from your homeboy, Smokey. You are always in my heart.

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: We know that Vicente was a very special person, judging from the number of tributes we have read. We are very sorry for your loss, and hope it moves you (and others) to change some things in your life so that others will not be writing a sad tribute to you. Life is a precious gift, Smokey, and when it is gone, it is gone forever. We think the best tribute you could give your friend is to live a long, long life so that you can keep him alive in your heart forever.



Rest In Peace, Carnala

I think the worst thing that has happened to me was when my carnala died. It took a lot of time to overcome it, but I had to understand she's all right now.

Years passed and one day I had a special talk with my jefa and she told me I had to overcome this situation, that I had to put effort into it and find strength to go on, and with her help and apoyo, everything had a solution.

I thank and appreciate what she did for me, with her help, everything was possible.

-Creep, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When someone we love passes, we experience a huge loss. We don't think your carnala would want you to feel so sad; we guess that's what your jefa said, too. We're happy to know you got the support you needed and are moving on with your life, now.

Freedom

Freedom sounds so good to me right now, to walk out these doors would be the best feeling in the world besides the day when I see my daughter being born.

I feel like as soon as I'm free, I will feel like my life will be just beginning. I turned eighteen in here and I don't feel like I'm my own man.

I feel like I can't be a man in here because I can't take care of my family.

-Family Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your new life does begin when you walk out those doors, although you can use this time as positively as possible — study, read, write, and make a plan for how you'll succeed once you're out. How do you plan to take care of your family?

Two Parts To Snitching

I think snitching has two parts to it. The first part is when your not man enough to accept you did something wrong and blame it on someone innocent. The second part is seeing something being done and snitching. Honestly the only way I would ever snitch is when I see someone getting hurt, or if the crime affects me or my loved ones.

If the cops brought me in for a crime I didn't do, I would snitch because I wouldn't want to lose my freedom for another person.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You break it down and explain this topic well. You have good ethics, Abbas. Don't ever back down from your morals or from what your heart says.

Being Incarcerated

My worst experience is being incarcerated right now. I'm not able to see my family for a long time because it seems they got court scheduled every three weeks.

This would've been my last year in school, but it looks like I'm 'a have to go to night school just to graduate. The worse thing I missed most is my family and friends.

My overcoming it is also my family and friends. If I think of them, I have a reason to do my program good and not mess up. Now when I make a decision, I think of the faces of my family and patnas and I say to myself, "If I mess up I will get time added and it will be longer until I see my folks."

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent job using your family and friends as a motivation to make more positive decisions. Even though this is your worst experience, it seems that you have learned a lot, so in the long run this worst experience may help you get your life on a the right track.

What Brings Me Down

What brings me down is when my life seems like it isn't going anywhere.

What brings me down is when my life is controlled.

What brings me down is when

I do the same things everyday.

What brings me down is when people make racist jokes.

What brings me down is when people disrespect me or my loved ones.

What brings me down is when my life seems like it's over with.

What brings me down is when people give up on life.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can tell you aren't giving up on life. Even better is that you have been talking about living a better life when you get out and that means you are going to live to your full potential. When others try to bring you down, just remember the only reason they are hating is because they are feeling bad about themselves and/or they are ignorant. You do a good job by not going down on their level.

The Worst Thing

The worst thing that ever happened to me was last year.

First, I came to Juvenile Hall in March, then the judge told me I was going to a group home and that was the first time I ever got sent out of my house.

When I was in the Hall, two weeks before I got out, my grandmother died, and she was the first person that ever died in my family. Then when I was getting ready to get out of the group home, my uncle died in my house in front of my mom, and she stopped eating and couldn't go to sleep. When my uncle died, my mom had to miss work because she didn't have no one to look over my little brother.

-Reese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, what a bad year, Reese. How are your mom and brother now? What keeps you coming back to the Hall since it's obviously been a bad experience for you?

The Courage To Breakdown

I've experienced a lot of terrible things throughout my life. The worst of my experiences is being incarcerated. When a person is incarcerated, it is very hard for them to overcome it, until they are free. I really can't overcome what I'm going through right now. I just try to distract myself to pass time. I read a lot of books, I pray, I try to imagine this whole ordeal is really a bad dream.

But like all human beings, people break down. Like two times a week I break down and I can't stop the tears. Then for the next few days I just feel really down and keep to myself. Then I'm back to normal and start distracting myself all over again. So my advice to people who are going through a terrible experience is to read or try to distract yourself, and not to fight the tears.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From the Beat: All those "tough" guys in max talk about never crying. Yeah right. You are one of the few brave ones who will admit it. Sounds like most of the week you are depressed in a way. It's perfectly normal, considering all the pressure you have on you. Tears help release that pressure, overwhelming sadness and stress so never hesitate to cry. You deal with it well by also occupying yourself in a productive way. Right on and keep the faith.

I read a lot of books, I pray, I try to imagine this whole ordeal is really a bad dream.



Standouts

I Won't Forget

I won't forget how that night was.
I felt my life fading away like a puddle of blood.
I won't forget that night, he said be quiet, it would be alright.
I was getting raped and couldn't put up no fight
I won't forget that night
Screaming, "Stop, please stop!"
I wanted to tell someone, but my heart stopped,
My tears dropped.
All I can remember is that night and that spot.

-Voniesha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That truly was an unforgettable night. How did that experience change your life? Do you feel angry, sad, both? Does writing about this rape help you feel better? Are you talking to anyone about it? Is there any advice you would give someone who's going through the same kind of thing?

I Have A Dream Too!

I have a dream
That one day
Police will catch all the right people
And lock-up will actually correct people

I have a dream
That soon
All people will listen to their parents
And families will no longer break up

I have a dream
That when I get home
The cops will realize
That I learned my lesson
And stop pushing me against cars
And stop cramming me in back seats

I have a dream
That one day
My life will be stable
And I'll stay out of trouble

I have a dream
That before I die
I will be satisfied
That I had the best life possible

-Ceet, Marin

From The Beat: Tight poem, Ceet. Has your family broken up? That can be very disorienting and depressing. If you've realized that you've learned your lesson about staying out of trouble, most likely the police will realize it about you, too, when they don't see you anymore. What would your best life possible be? What do you want for your life? How do you hope to get what you want/need?

I'm glad I have someone who really wants to help me succeed and wants to take steps towards my success and time away from their life... for me!

This Is What Brings Me Down

What brings me down
Is my family not being around.
What brings me down
Is seeing people talk but hearing no sound.
What brings me down
Is the pain stabbing me until I can't breathe.
What brings me down
Is me screaming but nobody can hear me.
What brings me down
Is my life.
What brings me down,
Is the tears I cry are as thick as blood.
What brings me down
Is my dad and mom not showing me no love.

-Downgirl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a sad piece, Downgirl. Now that we know what brings you down, what gets you up? What was the last thing that made you smile? If you had a million dollars, what would be the first thing you would buy? What is the happiest moment in your life? Tell us more about your upside.

Thinking To Myself

I am in Durango thinking to myself
about all of my mistakes I've made
and what I've done to myself
Thinking about all the choices I've been making
And also about the drugs I've been taking
I think it's time for me to make the right choices
to stop denying it
And listen to all the voices
I want to change, trust me I do
So I'll listen to what you have to say too
Trust me this time and open up your eyes
And I won't be a fraud and show a disguise
My name is Andrew and I'm here to say
That I'm going to change and make things better along the way
Thank you for listening.

-Andrew, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Andrew, we know you have a lot of time to think in detention. You seem to be thinking in a positive direction. Your openness to listen to others may expose your mind to solutions/actions/opportunities you've never thought of before. Be aware of who you are listening to and what you think about over and over. Making a commitment is the easy part, but sticking to it is more difficult. If you believe in yourself you can do it.

My Aunt

Today is April 28, 2004. I'm studying to get my GED. Hopefully if I achieve it, my PO will release me to my aunt.

My aunt lives in San Francisco with my cousin, and she wants to help me get off on the right foot. I will live with her, and she's gong to help me get a job, a driver's license, enrollment in a community college, and eventually have a girlfriend, my own housing unit, a decent car, and a new path in life.

I'm glad I have someone who really wants to help me succeed and wants to take steps towards my success and time away from their life... for me! I feel privileged to really have someone like my aunt.

To the people incarcerated — stay strong, keep your heads up, noses clean, and remember: "The grass is always greener on the other side." God bless.

-Tim, Marin

From The Beat: It's wonderful that your aunt will help you. Will you go back to high school to get your GED? What community college will you go to? Can you get a part-time job to help you get through school? What kind of a job do you want? Can you also help your aunt out? Do some grocery shopping, wash the kitchen and bathroom floors? Maybe cook dinner or wash dishes or so some laundry for her? If she's working, she'll be really grateful for your help in return.



Pain And Struggles

Pain and struggles
Tears and scares
People that hate you
For who you are

Memories of bad times
That you don't want
Because these memories
They begin to haunt

Images of the past
Will always stay with you
They'll always be there
Because they can teach you

Not from the past
But only for the future
Learn from your choices
Let them be your tutor

No matter what has been told
Or thrown in your direction
Look inside yourself
And go in your own direction.

-Quorry, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: You're right Quorry, you can't erase your past, but the future can go in whatever direction you choose. What direction is your life going to take? Are you going to make something great of yourself? The key lies within you — nobody else can do it for you.

**Images of
the past
Will always
stay with
you
They'll
always be
there
Because
they can
teach you**

My Life Story

When I was six years old, I lived in Germany. I lived in a two-story house. I have one brother and four sisters. I always like to do new bad things.

One day I went to the park down the street and I saw these kids smoking cigarettes. My mom always smoked, so I wanted to try it, too. I asked these kids if I can try to smoke. One of them gave me a full cigarette. I smoked since then. I then stopped when I was eight years old.

Another day I found a big box of spray paint and I always liked to play with fire. I put at least five together and I put them in this metal trash can. I then put all of them under fire. After about ten minutes, the trashcan was not there any more. The police came and I got in trouble.

I always did some bad things, but as I got older, I got in bigger trouble. I am now seventeen years old and I just got sick of making trouble. Now all they do is put you in the Hall. It is not worth it to spend time in the Hall. I want to get out of here so bad that I wanted to write something right. I wish I can go back, so I can do the right things and to change who I am, but that is all up to me and how I make decisions.

-Snake, Marin

From The Beat: You seem to have a lot of insight into what you're up to and up against, Snake. What do you enjoy doing that's legal? Play basketball? Go swimming? Skateboard? Write stories? Hang with your friends? Find a girlfriend? Would it help you stay out of trouble, if you develop your unique skills and talents? Great luck to you!

Cuando Estan Aqui

Yo le estoy escribiendo a toda la gente salvatrucha que estan en la torcida. Quiero decirles que no se aguite, que se mantengan juntos, y que esten trucha porque aqui hay personas que tratan de separarnos, porque tienen miedo vernos juntos.

Aqui caen un monton de vatos que dicen que allá afuera eran unos grandes pandilleros y cuando tienen una semana aqui empiezan a llorar, a decir que quieren salir, que quieren ver a su ruca, a su mama, a mi hija, y todo el tiempo que pasan aqui se la pasan diciendo que cuando salgan se van a portar bien, que van a cambiar sus vidas.

Creo que dicen un montón de mentiras porque cuando salen y van a su barrio empiezan a decir que ellos estaba representando su barrio, y un monton de cosas. Pero lo que también hacen es mucho desmadres, y caen otra vez y vuelven a hacer la misma cosas otra vez. Empiezan a llorar y a decir las mismas tonteras.

Yo nomas les quiero decir a todos aquellos que si van a ser un pandillero que lo sean pero que no lloren cuando esten en problemas o torcidos, que sean realmente lo que dicen que son y que no aparentan otra cosa que no son.

From The Beat: ¿Si tú fueras ellos, que motivación les diera para que ellos no hablen tonterías o se metan en tonterías? Nos vas a disculpar pero nosotros pensamos que tú también esta involucrado en tonteras, porque estas hablando de las cosas que ellos dicen y también estas en el juego de las pandillas. ¿Alguna vez te portastes de esta manera, y si no, crees que te relacionas a estas persona de alguna forma.

When They Are Here

I'm writing to all the Salvadoran people that find themselves behind bars. I want to tell y'all not get sad, to stick together, and to be on the lookout because in here there are people that want to see us go at it because they're scared to see us united.

In here, there are a bunch of fools who say that when they were on the outs, they were big-time gangsters, but after a week of being locked up, they start to cry and say they want out of here because they want to see their females, their mothers, their daughters, and they spend their entire time in here saying that when they get out, they're going to behave themselves and that they're going to change their lives.

I believe that everything that they are saying is a bunch of lies, because when they get out and go back to their 'hoods, they start to talk about how they represented their 'hood while they were locked up and a bunch of other things. Then they go back to doing dirt and pretty soon they end up back behind bars. Once again, while they're locked up, they start to cry and say the same stupid things all over again.

I just want to tell everyone that wants to be a gangster to go ahead and become one, but at the same time, don't cry when they get themselves into problems or behind bars. Be who they really say they are and don't front as if you're someone else when you're really not.

-Popeye B4, SF/YGC



Descanza En Paz

Esto va para todos los homies que han muerto rifando. Un día llamé a mi novia como a las 9 de la mañana, cuando supo que era yo, empezó a llorar.

Me dijo que tenía malas noticias para mí. Dijo que unos de mis homies lo habían matado en México. Él estaba en México porque lo habían deportado por una estupidez. Cuando me dijo la noticia, me quedé callado. Me dijo que lo habían picado 5 veces y que le tiraron piedra también.

Homies, estas en mi mente, que Dios te bendiga.

From The Beat: Nos imaginamos que esa noticia te llegó al alma, sentimos mucho lo sucedido, esperamos que donde sea que esté tu homie, que esté bien y que esté descansando en paz. Ahora, por quien tienes que ver es en ti mismo, en no terminar como tus homies por andar haciendo cosas no debidas. ¿Crees que esta noticia te ayude a cambiar algo en tu vida?

Rest In Peace

This is for all the homies who died banging. One day I called my girlfriend at around nine o'clock in the morning. When she knew that it was me, she started to cry. She told me that she had bad news to tell me.

She told me that one of my homies got killed in Mexico. He was in Mexico because he had been deported on some stupid stuff. When she told me the news, I stayed quiet on the phone. She told me that they had stabbed him five times and that they had thrown rocks at him as well.

Homies, y'all are on my mind. May God bless all of you all.

-Pony, Marin

Estoy Aqui Por Algo Que no Cometi

Bueno, yo tengo casi siete meses aqui por un delito que no cometi. Yo no lo hice pero no hay problemas. Lo que me gustaría cambiar del sistema es no pedir permiso para ir al baño.

La verdad es que aqui si hay unas personas que me estan ayudando, esas personas son mi abogado y la investigadora. Yo pienso que ellos estan haciendo todo lo posible para sacarme de aqui.

Si estuviera afuera no estuviera aqui pidiendo permiso para ir al baño, para levantarme o hacer algo.

Este sistema es un poco malo. Siento que haber caído aqui es un castigo porque aqui ellos te mandan cuando quieren, te meten a tu cuarto cuando quieren, como lo que ellos te den, y todo este tiempo es sólo tiempo perdido. Bueno, hasta la siguiente semana.

From The Beat: Te deseamos mucha suerte con las personas que te estan ayudando. Nosotros te creemos que no hayas hecho nada malo. En esta vida pasan cosas por las cuales nos arrepentimos, pero cada cosa pasa por alguna razón. Nos imaginamos que esto te pasó por andar con malas gabias, verdad. ¿Crees que después de esto podrás ver con quien te juntas?

I'm Here For Something I Didn't Commit

Well, I have almost seven months being in here for a crime that I did not commit. I did not do it, but it's all good. What I would like to change about the system is for everyone that is locked up not have to ask for permission to use the bathroom.

The truth is that in here, there truly are people who are helping me out. Those people are my lawyer and the investigator. I think that they are doing everything possible to help me get out of here.

If I were on the outs, I would not be in here having to ask for permission to use the bathroom, to get up, or do anything.

This system is messed up. I feel like having ended up in here is a punishment because in here, they push you around whenever they want. They put you in your room whenever they want and treat you however they feel like. All this time being locked up is wasted time. Well, until next week.

-Aviles, Santa Cruz

Me Siento Mal

Me siento muy mal, sin ánimos, sin alegría, muy solo, triste, angustiado. Sólo espero que Dios me ayude a recuperar mi libertad para comenzar una nueva etapa en mi vida, y para seguir adelante y ayudar a mi familia.

Me siento muy mal, me siento como un unitil. Pienso que la gente que opina mal de nosotros es porque nunca ha pasado por una mala situación o ha sufrido crisis. Esto no es parte de nosotros, de nuestra vida. No es agradable estar encerrada aqui entre cuatro paredes, sin poder estar libre, sin poder estar con mi familia, sin poder compartir momentos felices con ellos.

Las personas que opinan que debemos pagar los errores que cometemos deberían de tener corazón al pensar en las cosas que dicen sobre nosotros.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegue esa oportunidad para que te ayude a recuperar las cosas que has perdido y las metas que tienes que cumplir. A nadie le gusta estar entre paredes y que le esten diciendo que hacer, lo mejor es alejarse de cosas que lo lleven a perder muchos privilegios de la vida.

I Feel Bad

I feel very bad without ambition, without joy, lonely, sad, and in anguish. I just hope that God helps me recover my freedom so I can start a new chapter in my life and I can continue moving forward and helping out my family.

I feel very bad. I feel like an idiot. I think that people criticize us because they have never been through a bad situation or suffered through a crisis. This is not a part of us, of our lives. It's not pleasant being locked up in here between four walls, without one's freedom, without being with one's family, and without being able to share happy moments with them.

The people who feel like we should pay for the errors that we committed in life should have some compassion when they say the things they say about us.

-Javier B5, SF/YGC

La Vida Que Vivi En Mi País

Esta es la vida que viví en mi país. Cuando yo tenía ocho años, yo era pandillero y ahora que quiero cambiar no puedo cambiar solo. Le pido a Dios que me ayude a cambiar esta vida que llebo, que es mala y siempre ha sido vida de pandillero.

Vine a otro país para nada, sólo para meterme a otra pandilla. Mi vida ya no tiene solución, tampoco familia tengo.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a encontrar la ayuda de Dios para que cambies tu vida. El es el único Salvador y está bien dejar todo en mano de él. También deberías de dejarte ayudar de las personas que te quieren y desean lo mejor para ti. Es duro cambiar, pero con ganas siempre se hace, siempre. Nosotros conocemos muchos jovenes que han estado preso muchas veces y han cambiado poco a poco y han llegado a ser grandes cambios.

The Life I Lived In My Country

This is the life that I live in this country. When I was eight years old, I was already a gang member and now that I want to change, I can't do it by myself. I ask God to help me change the life that I live, which is bad, and that has always been the life of a gangster.

I came to another country for nothing, just to get myself jumped into another gang in a different country. My life no longer has a solution. I don't even have a family.

-Pinguino, Hillcrest



Being In Here

Something that brings me down is being in here. This place ain't shhh, but the thing that brings me down is seeing my mom cry whenever she comes and sees me.

I know y'all say this is your last time coming in here, but for must of us it's not. Like me, I said last time I ain't coming back, but look — I'm back.

Now I am doing six to nine at Camp. After I get out of camp, I ain't coming back. The only reason I ain't comin' back is so I don't have to see my mom cry for something I did.

-Funk-E, San Mateo

From The Beat: Why do so many say that this is their last time, then return as if coming back home to the Hall? What will you need to sacrifice or change in order to break the cycle this time through? How do you plan to make up for the lost time and pain you've caused your mom?

I know y'all say this is your last time coming in here, but for must of us it's not.

Dolor Interno

Pues ese dolor es muy duro, especialmente cuando te deja tu novia, cuando te dicen muchas cosas de tu familia, cuando te desprecian, cuando tu corazón está latiendo muy fuerte por otra persona.

No hay que esconder ese dolor. Yo le digo a mi corazón que aguante el dolor mientras esta pasando el problema. Cuando lo escondo, lo suelto todo y me pongo a llorar y a recordar lo que pasó. Luego pasa, pero se toma tiempo para que me pase. Esto es lo que hago para esconder mi sentimientos, especialmente cuando tengo ganas de llorar, le digo a mi corazón y a todo mi cuerpo y a mi sentimientos que se aguanten un poco para no sufrir tanto.

From The Beat: Si es verdad todos estos sentimientos son dolorosos. La gente pueda que aparenta ser fuerte, pero por dentro siempre hay dolor y aunque lo esconda siempre estea ahí. Lo mejor que hay que hacer es no aguantarse y buscar la manera como desahogarse y dejar salir todas las cosas que los atan a uno.

Inner Pain

Well, this type of pain is very painful, especially when your girlfriend leaves you, your family talks a whole bunch of mess about you, when they look down on you, and when your heart is longing very strongly for another person.

There's no need to hide that pain. I tell my heart to endure the pain for the duration of the problem. When I hide it, I end up letting my emotions go and I start to cry and reminisce about what went down. Later, these feelings go away, but it takes time for that to happen. This is what I do to hide my feelings, especially when I get the urge to cry. I tell my heart and my entire body, plus my feelings, to suck it up for a while so I won't have to suffer more than I already am.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

Hice Algo Que no Debi

Ahorita estoy aqui torcido en la juvenile porque hice algo que no debí haber hecho. Fui culpado por unos cuantos asaltos con mano armada, heridas graves, y por violación de probación. Lo bueno fue que me quitaron dos cargos de asalto con mano armada.

Ahorita me trajeron a la juvenile de CYA para corte. Llebabas dos meses y unos días allá. La mera verdad es que CYA no es sólo un chiste. Fui sentenciado a 5 años y 6 meses, pero puedo salir con parole en dos años, pero no lo creo porque ahí tienes que juntarte con tu pandilla y representar lo que eres porque si no lo haces, te golpean. Por esto, te digo que lo pienses bien antes de andar en pandilla. La pandilla no es un juego.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tomes la decisión que te ayudará a salir de ese lugar. Todo está en ti, todo lo que tienes que hacer es decidirte si quieres hacer más tiempo, cambiar tu vida o seguir en el desmadre que te llevará a puros problemas. Te aconsejamos que busques como recuperar lo que es tuyo y no dejar que se te vaya lo mejor de tu vida de las manos.

Well, I'm Going To Talk About My Experiences

Right now, I am locked up in Juvenile Hall because I did something that I should not have done. I was charged with a few accounts of assault with a firearm which resulted in serious injuries, and for violating my probation. However, the good thing is that they dropped two charges of assault with a firearm from my case.

Now they brought me to Juvenile Hall in CYA for a court hearing. I had already served two months and a few days at Juvenile Hall. The truth is, CYA is not a joke. I was sentenced to five years and six months, but I can get out on parole after two years, but I don't think that's going to happen because in CYA one has to click-up with your fellow gang members and represent where you're from, because if you don't do it, you get mopped. That's why I'm saying to think twice about joining any gang. Gangs are not a joke.

-José, Santa Cruz

Lo Que Estoy Pasando

Soy Juan otra vez, esta vez les escribo para que vean por lo que estoy pasando, para que los que van empezando en este jale de las gangas no se metan en esto porque es malo y no lleguen a terminar aqui.

También quiero pedirles consejo a The Beat, porque ellos me dan consejos muy bonitos y me dan la sancha de sacar lo que tengo en mi mente y en mi corazón. Cuando escribo al Beat, me curo de toda mis preocupaciones.

From The Beat: Amigos, nosotros estamos orgullosos de ti, que quieras ayudar a los demás, sabes que el trabajo de nosotros es ayudarlos a ustedes, y no lo hacemos por el trabajo sino porque queremos que no terminen en este lugar. Este lugar es feo, se siente feo estar encerrado, sin mirar a la familia y sin tener lo que a uno le gusta. Nuestro consejo hacia ti, es que este no es lugar para ustedes, ustedes cometen errores, pero no es para que esten en este lugar. Mira, si tu ya caistes aqui, no caigas otra vez, cuidate y no deje que te metan preso por algún error que ustedes no quisieron hacer.

What I'm Going Through

It's me, Juan, once again, and this time I'm writing to let you know how I am living so that after reading this, anyone who is thinking about joining a gang will throw those thoughts away and won't end up in here. Also, for those who do join a gang, I'm writing to let them know that they might end up where I am right now.

Also, I want to ask to The Beat for advice because they give me good advice and they give me an opportunity to vent everything that is on my mind and in my heart on paper. When I write to The Beat, I cure myself of all my worries.

-Juan, Santa Cruz



Tu Recuerdo

Es una noche oscura
Sola y fría, se sentía
Las horas eran lentas,
Pues del mundo tú te ibas
Llorando ese día
De un terrible dolor
Sabía que tú vida no tendría salvación
Tu alma se fue al cielo
Como el humo que salía
Lo único que quedó
Fueron recuerdos, fantacías,
Visiones en mi mente
Oscuramente yo veía
Desde el día que te fuistes
Todo cambio en esta vida
Recuerdo de los momentos.
Es difícil de olvidarlos.
Aunque fueron pocos
En mi corazón los cargo
Dejastes a tu familia sola y triste
Eso me duele
En tu último día no podía ir a verte.
Es tu recuerdo, homie.

From The Beat: Que lástima que haya quedado cosas dolorosas de tu homies. No te aflijas amigo, estamos seguro que donde sea que esté él te está extrañando como tu a él. Amigo, esto que pasó fue algo doloroso, de corazón esperamos que nunca te vaya a pasar nada malo a ti, y que llegues a doler a tu familia. Amigo, cuidensen, salgan de estas tonteras, busquen la vida real, sin problema. Si vieran lo lindo que se siente caminar sin sentir que hay enemigos en la calles. Ustedes pueden ser uno de estas personas que se sienten bien.

Your Memory

It's a dark night
The night feels cold and lonely
The hours went by slowly
Well, you were leaving earth
Crying that day
From a terrible pain
I knew that there was no saving your life
Your soul went up to heaven
Like the smoke that was being exhaled
The only thing that was left
Were memories and fantasies
Visions in my mind
Even in the dark, I could see things clearly
Everything changed on that day
I remember those moments
It's hard to forget them
Even though they were few
I carry them in my heart
You left your family sad and lonely
That hurts me
On your last day, I couldn't even go and see you
It's your memory, homie.

-Joker, 150 Crew

**next day I came
to court and I got
locked up for one
hundred days**

Well, what I do know is that my family is in Mexico worrying about me and I am in here locked up, but I believe in God and that he will help me get out of here so I can be reunited with my family. Being in here is the worst thing that has happened to me so far this year. Well, so far this year. I've been locked up several times.

-Pedro, Santa Cruz

RIP Choco

Sometimes when I think of my homeboy that passed away a few weeks ago, it brings lots of memories and it makes me laugh or it brings me down. When it brings me down, I start to feel weird feelings and I don't like to feel like that so I start to get mad — like I don't know what to do. It just gets me nervous because I'm stuck in my room and all I can think of is the old times when I was in the outs and he comes up, 'cause I used to chill with him all the time.

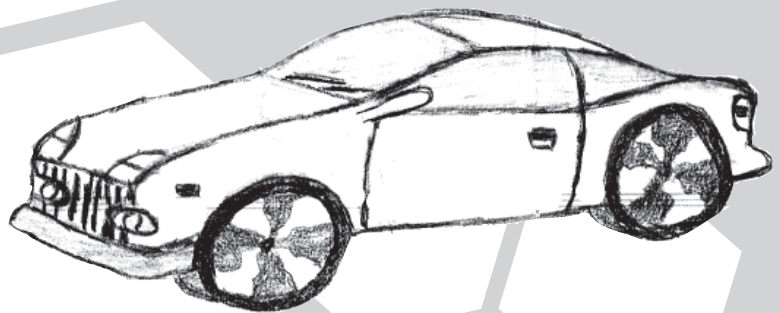
We started chilling with our gang like at the same time, but he got jumped in first. Then, like a few months later I got jumped. I remember doing lots of stuff with him, like smoking weed or just chilling, you know.

But when I heard this I was mad, I was angry. I have hate built up for my rivals. I don't know if I'm ever going to stop the gang life. And I couldn't go to his funeral so I could see him one last time.

The last memory was chilling at my house snorting crystal all night with him just talking, and the next day I came to court and I got locked up for one hundred days. That's the last memory of my homie. RIP Choco.

-Kasper, San Mateo

From The Beat: For the past few weeks we've been able to feel the pain in your eyes in workshops. The way you describe the confusion that you're feeling — the anger, the nervousness, the memories — is deep, and we can only hope that the pencil and paper are helping you deal with this tragedy. There's no doubt it's hot in your area, and while we're tempted to preach, we realize that we're in no position to tell you what to do. All we have to say is that your boy's life has already been lost, and there's nothing that you'll ever be able to do to bring him back. It is tragic, but it's the truth. It's not worth losing your life — to the gun or to the Pen — as well. We understand the hate you feel for those who killed your boy. It's the most natural feeling in the world to have right now, and it'll last for a while. However, acting on that hate is a different story, and while it might feel better for that second, it'll only deepen the pain you end up feeling.



Mal Comportamiento

Yo estoy aqui porque me porte mal cuando andaba afuera y me pongo triste porque no sé cuando voy a salir. Estoy preocupado por mi familia porque no sé como estan.

Pues mi familia está en México preocupado por mí. Y yo aqui estoy encerrado, pero confío en Dios que podré salir de aqui para reunirme con mi familia. Esto es lo más feo que me ha pasado en este año. Pues en este año he caído varias veces.

From The Beat: Esperamos que pronto salga de este lugar y que llegues a saber como estan tus padres. Te deseamos una tremenda suerte en recuperar lo que estas perdiendo, y que llegues estar junto a las personas que te quieren.

Bad Behavior

I'm in here because I behaved badly while I was on the outs and I get sad because I don't know when I am going to get out. I'm worried about my family because I don't know how they are doing.



Innocence

Today is Friday, April 30th, 2004. I've been here for seven weeks. Yeah it might not seem like a long time, but it is for someone who's innocent, but I had court three days after I was booked they said I couldn't go home so I had to wait until April 23.

As the days came closer my PO told me Camp, but my lawyer found new information and witnesses, so when the day came they postponed it to a further investigate it and all information my lawyer said is helping prove my innocence.

So I'm feeling better but I have to wait until May 6 to see if my innocence has been revealed. But this just shows how quick the system is to throw one of us in here even if we're innocent or not.

-Lim, San Mateo

From The Beat: You're lucky to have someone representing you who is willing to do the hard work necessary to prove your innocence. Under law we're supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, but it's scary how often that phrase seems to be flipped on its head. If you do get out on the 6th, how are you going to make up for lost time on the outs? What is it that you miss the most? How will you make sure your PO never even has the chance to violate you again?

Drugs

When I first tried my first drug, I was thirteen. Weed was cool — it was the thing to do. I was having a good time getting high.

When my dad found out, he wasn't mad — he was glad. He thought that I was experimenting, but what he didn't know was that I've been using for six months.

I started fighting with my parents, and they could see the change — that I was acting strange, coming home, smelling weird, my eyes bloodshot all day.

My dad confronted me and I told him to go screw off. From that day, it would never be the same. I started getting into trouble at school, flipping off teachers, cussing out the dean. My friends and I robbed a kid. Now I'm in the system — somebody snitched and now I'm heated.

Now I'm on probation, my PO always trying to lock me up — what do you know. In April she finally got her way, but when I get out I'm going to change my ways. I hope I can change.

-Greg, San Mateo

From The Beat: Why was your dad glad when you were experimenting? What are you doing to change your ways, starting with your time in the Hall? What will it take to start to repair the relationship you have with your parents? What sacrifices are you willing to make in order to stay on the outs, free of the system?

Doing What She Wanted Me To Do

If I could write a speech about the worst thing that I've ever experienced, I would have to say when my baby sister died. It was the most ugliest thing I've ever experienced, because she was the youngest out of five kids. We all took care of her like she was our brother.

I would have done anything for her. I loved her more than I loved myself. When she died it was like a part of me died too. I couldn't eat or sleep. I sat in my room just lookin' at pictures of her, refusing to believe that she was dead.

But how I got over it was to do what things she would of wanted me to do, and that is to make something of myself and make her proud. The end. Thank you.

-Jovan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think one of the best things anyone can do when they lose someone close is to do the things that would make her or him happy. Many parents deal with the death of their child by focusing on something that was important to them — their music, their interests, their friends. We are very sorry you lost your baby sister. That hurts. But you're doing the right thing by making her proud. What do you think she'd be most proud of you for?

Mi Jefecita

Mi madre, I give thanks to my mother for everything she had done to me. She gave me life and a precious familia. I love my jefecita for givin' me pretty carnalas and a carnal that I love so much.

I had never disrespected my jefecita in no way 'cause she gave me respect and love and a good education. I won't ever leave my jefita again in my life or solita 'cause I need her and she needs me. Gotta thank the Lord for giving me a bonita madrequita en mi vida and for not taking her away from me.

We all gotta appreciate what our jefecitas have done for us, it's for our best lo mejor. Que no? Don't be ashamed of our own raza — the Brown against the Brown, that ain't the way to get down. En serio, think about it.

Gotta give love to our jefitas right now before it's too late. Gotta make them be proud of us. We know we need a madresita to be there for us, so be there for her. It makes me happy when I talk about my madresita 'cause if it wasn't for her I wouldn't be saying this or my vato no me tendria, feel me?

Be proud to have your mother — to jefecita — by your side before we die. Much love and respeto. Al rato.

-Mona, San Mateo

From The Beat: As you've probably noticed, we didn't print the other pieces you dropped this week — they don't step to this level, and since we know you can drop solid pieces like this, we're going to ask you to continue to step to this level. The sentiments in this piece are beautiful — love of your mother, the stupidity of Brown on Brown hate and violence. The question that we're left with is how you're going to be there for your mother. What are you willing to sacrifice in order to maintain your freedom next time around? How do you show your pride in your mother? What will it take to show your love for her by staying out with her, being by her side as she's been there by yours?

A Brick Wall

The only thing that brings me down is knowing my bra-bras are getting picked off and it's nothing I can do about it.

I know I can be something in life, but the Pen has put a brick wall in my way. When people say, "Do you know A-dog?" they say no. Then they say, "Oh yeah, the one from that block." I want to be known for something more greater than a block monster.

People say nothing brings them down, but to me I think you're being fake with yourself because you and I both know some thing brings you down. The sun shines until the day it rains. Don't let anything stop you. Whatever brings you down, know there is a elevator to bring you back up. Let's get it.

-A-Dog, San Mateo

From The Beat: For someone who's spent so many workshops telling us that he doesn't feel things, this is a revelation — and it's also what we knew all along. The Pen is a literal brick wall in your way of being who you want to be, but naive as it sounds, there are ways to use the time preparing to shine on the outs. What is it that you want to be known for? What's your elevator?



Telling

One thing is telling is okay, but it depends on what you're telling about. If it's a little kid getting raped or something, he/she can tell because that goes against the grain. If I heard someone from my block did some shhh like that, I speak for all my bra-bras when I say I would beat the hell out of him. We only have two rules on our block: you don't mess with old people or little kids.

But other than that people should never snitch. The way I feel about it is if you claim to be a "thug," then be a thug to the fullest. No matter what the time can be you never snitch or you die. Me, personally, I live a rogue life. I could go home if I bumped my gums but this is the life I live. But then again if you do dirt with someone and he starts to talk there is no rule that says if he/she points the finger you can't point it back, but I still wouldn't do it.

So snitch if you want to be your own person. If you want to tell, tell — don't just not do it because people say "snitches get stitches." If you feel it's a time to snitch, go ahead and do it — just know you might tell on the wrong person and it might come back to haunt you.

-A-Dog, San Mateo

From The Beat: You took this topic on in ways more deep than most of the other pieces we've seen, and you allow more ambiguity in your attitude towards snitching. Is there a fundamental difference in what you mean when you "tell" on someone versus "snitching" on someone? We hear you when you say you wouldn't snitch, but would you be able to have any respect for someone who you knew had snitched on someone else?

The Gateway

They say pot is the gateway to rot
starting out with growing in the backyard
my parents found out and that was hard
Stealing, lying and manipulating was my game
until I realized I was only doing this for fame
Had no social life outside of sessions
until a cocaine drug dealer gave me a few lessons
Throat swelled up, nowhere to run
almost passed out from a lack of fun
and finally got locked up to realize my mistakes
But you know how drugs are tricking your mind
thinking everything's under control when your sober one time
Had to go further and rob a house
finally got caught up by a onetime snitch
I wish this never happened because it was a hell of a trip
But my parents took over and sent me away
four months out alone and okay
My stream of thought selfish and cold
led me to relapse and run from society
My mind running on drugs to endure the pain
until one night I snapped to reclaim
Been in juvenile only two weeks
alone in my cell reaching my peaks
What's different this time, I ask myself
but realize the answer lay ahead in my actions and wealth
I hope the law creates a self-epiphany for me
so one day I won't be locked up on TV

-Recovering, San Mateo

From The Beat: We wish you would have signed your name to your piece — good writing like this deserves credit. What is different this time around? How are you going to break with the drug habit? What habits can you replace the old ones with, habits that help bring you up instead of pulling you down? What's the epiphany you're hoping to have?

Reflections

As I look in the mirror
And see back at myself
I see a reflection
Even deeper a shelf

A shelf with these memories
And a shelf with this pain
A shelf full of bad times
With a shelf full of shame

I'm not so much resentful
More so the word despise
I see people superficial
I'm only seen with their eyes

They only see the outside
And not the part that counts
If they look more on the inside
They'll see that I amount.

-Quorry, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: When we feel our life amounts to something worthwhile and impacts others, we can find the strength to face negativity and difficulties that come our direction. You have courageously chosen to open the door to your life, your pain, your struggles, and your insight for Beat readers. You have the ability to communicate and create life pictures that teach us about ourselves and our interactions with others. We encourage you to continue writing. We acknowledge the value of what you have to share Quorry. Thank you!

Wasted Mind, Wasted Time

The worst thing that ever happened to me is getting locked down. I think that the worst thing that can happen to anyone. Going through it right now, that's why I feel that way.

Getting your freedom taken away from you is ever that. It's not one thing that could amount to freedom. The only thing that would be worse than getting your freedom taken away is your time.

When you are locked up time don't stop. Your body is just in one place. If you don't use your time to learn something, that would mean your mind is locked up with your body, and that mean they got you.

Not only me, but anyone can overcome time by using the time to their advantage. So if you got to be locked down, don't lock your mind down with your body. When that happens it's nothing you can do. Your world stops. But anyone can keep their world going by reading, leaning, and overcoming their situation.

Learning from your mistakes can be the key to overcoming the trap that a lot of people fall pray to. That key can open a lot of doors for a person if they know how to use it. So for people out there locked down, don't give up on your schooling. That's the key: Yo' mind. Don't lock it down.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your excellent words of advice work equally for people locked up as for people in the so-called "free world." We know far too many free people who keep their minds tightly locked up in prejudice and ignorance, and who never use that precious freedom they possess to unlock their minds. Even though you are locked up physically, you are a step ahead of them. What do you do on the inside to make sure your mind grows and develops? Don't forget the importance of your mind when you are out of this situation and able to widen your mind with even more knowledge.

**If you don't use your time to learn something,
that would mean your mind is locked up with
your body, and that mean they got you.**



The Speech I'd Give

If I could write a speech I would write it so everybody could feel it. I would talk about how it was when I'm locked up and the things that I went through while incarcerated.

One day I will overcome being locked up, or maybe even write a book about my life. but if I wrote a speech it would go like this:

I wonder if anyone care? Is there any hope for the future? Will there be chances to get jobs? Will people stop judging me by my looks and the clothes I wear? Can the police stop harassing me on the streets? And can family be there when you really need their support when you're doing good?

It's someone always gone be there to bring you down.

-Zoomungus B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The series of questions you pose in your "speech" tell a whole lot about your life. We wonder if the public, hearing these questions, would feel where you're coming from. You write that you will one day overcome these obstacles, but you don't explain how you plan to do that. Of course, writing about it helps us to understand, and may help you to get things off your chest, but beyond that, can you think of any strategies that will help you overcome being locked up?

Dice Life

My life is like a dice game
hoping I will have a nice day
a lot of people know my name
I keep crapping out
hoping I get the number or seven or eleven
hoping I make it to heaven
'Cause death is coming my way
what can I say
I keep on hitting the highway
I'm living the gangsta life
always throwing out the dice
end up in the Hall like mice stuck in a maze
My life is like a race
my time is ticking
I keep on taking my chances to throw the dice
always ending up with a new crime.
I'm not throwing the dice out no more
'cause I'm starting to think right
so I put them away
'Cause I ain't letting death come for me
soon ending up in jail my whole life
'cause now I know my life will end up tight
I quit playing the devil's game
'cause I know I can get my fame a better way
'cause I'm not going to call the devil's name
I quit playing the dice game
that's how I was living my life in shame.

-Spooky, San Mateo

From The Beat: Man, if only life was a dice game — if only you could just keep rolling over and over until you hit seven or eleven, and the only thing you could lose is the money in your pockets. The consequences of life are more serious, and we're impressed that you're starting to recognize the chances you've been taking thus far. What are your goals now? When you get back to the outs, how are you going to resist the pressure from the homies to do dirt? What are you going to focus on instead of the gangsta ways that have brought you to the Hall?

**It's been hard for me to
control my temper in
this program.**

Haters

Look left
look right
trying to see if they're out of sight
I try to shake 'em
dust 'em off
telling 'em I'm sucka free
So get lost
everything I do and got
has them trying to take my spot
Here they come again
let's play "Hide and Hate"
Ready or not . . .
Steady knocking what I wear
and wherever I go
they're there
I don't have to see them
'cause I can feel them mug and stare
Especially in here
they even hate in jail
rolling their eyes
when you get mail
Why they trying to playa hate on me
smiling in my face
like they mean something to me
Fake females
trying to steal ma shine
always wanting what's mine
They're everywhere
in the newspaper
on TV
right next to you
right next to me
Coming around
playing the role
of a friend of mine
I can see a hater from the one hundred yard line
but they come at me like I'm blind
I must tell this generation
at this rate
hating should become a crime.

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: Maybe it should be a crime, but we don't see that comin' down the legislative pipe anytime soon. Therefore, the question is how you're going to overcome the hating. Is it worth the energy to take it all on, fighting against the haters with all your might? Or is it better to let it slide, be who you are, and let the voices of those trying to pull you down become distant echoes?

What Brings Me Down, You Ask?

A lot of things bring me down, like when anyone of my homies die, (RIP Fred-Fred, Joe Cheese, Ming-Lee, and R-Dog). When I get in trouble with YTEC I don't get to see any of my homies. That's just the basics, but now I'm doing cool now.

I should be getting out of here by July. It's been hard for me to stay in this program because I used to get high everyday and night. I got to be in the house at a certain time. It's been hard for me to control my temper in this program.

-Li'l' Joe YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Hey homie, July is right around the corner. If you stay and think positive, pretty soon, before you know it, you'll be out kicking it with the homies again, and hopefully this time it will be more responsibly. Also, remember that there is more to life than just getting high all the time. There's a time and a place for everything. Handle your business first, and then have your fun, but always responsibly. How can you work at controlling your temper?



A Lesson Learned

The worst thing that ever happened was when I robbed one of my ninjas.

About a week later everybody was outside because an OG died from my block. We was out smoking weed and, drinking, and then somebody told the person I robbed's cousin, and then he told another ninja, and next thing you know, I am on the ground getting my ass kicked, getting smacked around in the face, they dragged me up and down the block.

They brought me to the dude I stole it from, and told him to come outside with his son. But his son wasn't there so I was happy as hell. And then they dragged me again up the block and socked me in my face. I went home beat up and dirty, hopped in the shower, and fell asleep.

So the people that is out there stealing from people, yours is coming. Like they say in the Jets, what goes around comes around.

I just turned a teenager in YGC on April 25th, 2004, and I think God did that for a reason. Everything is for a reason.

-Malo B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you think God's reason was for putting you in YGC? Did you really learn the lesson that you spit here, that what goes around comes around? What changes do you plan to make in your life when you find yourself breathing free air again?

Waiting For You

Sometimes, I wake up in the middle of the night. I close my eyes and I picture you here and I hug my blanket wishing that I could hold you. I wait everyday for your letter. Without you my heart is turning cold, and I can't cry. I just hurt inside.

These cold walls and steel doors can't love me. They can only hold me, but never the way I hold you. They will never warm my cold heart. They will never change how my heart feels, but I know someday I will be leaving from here.

I will only hate myself because I lost you and I love you. True love is hard to find. When I thought I found it, I lost it.

I pray just to see your face. Sometimes, I fall on my knees and I beg to God to please, bring your love back to me, but I only see you in my dreams.

Only when I sleep I can smile and feel loved for a little while, remember your warm embrace, and the look on your face as I tell you I love you. I need you like that air that I breathe 'cause every night you're all that I see and all that I dream 'cause without you there's only sleepless nights. So tonight I hold you tight and kiss you while I dream.

I love you.

-Andrew YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: "You got it bad" — even worse than Usher. Hey, man, better do something about it. It seems you like this girl a lot, if you really want her, you should be there and not let go. This woman could be the one you were looking for and if this is it, you should look for her and not let her escape. Don't let it burn! Ya feel?

Why

Why do we do what we do? I don't know. I think because we don't think we have hope.

Look where we live in the jets with the rats and roaches. Half of our moms smoke dope, so we really think there is no hope. Our dad? Who? Yeah, that's what we think when our dad's name come up because he never been there.

But why we do what we do? It was because moms wasn't able to give us everything we want. So we found the fast life. The fast life give us everything — money, cars, girls — but the fast life take something from us that even our moms can't give back, and that's our freedom.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How do some (few) who grow up where you grew up still manage to hold onto hope? Can you ever get hope back? How?

Falling

"Damn! Damn! Damn! Why me?"

That's what he thought when tragedy hit his life. He has been running all his life, not worried about where he stepped or who he stepped on. The boy never looked down, until he hit a cliff and fell off. As the boy was falling, he looked down and could not see a bottom, as if the drop was endless. The first thing he thought was "Damn! Damn! Why me?"

The boy started to think more and more as the days passed, and he came to the conclusion that he was not living right. So he started to become a better person and promised if somehow he was saved he would always look down, always do good. This truly was the worst experience in his life.

I don't know if he made it to the bottom because I'm still falling. I ask why me all the time, but then again why not me? In a bad situation, take time and see what really matters, and evaluate your past. Learn to love yourself. Learn that the hardest fight in life is not physical. Learn and know that it will be a better day and light at the end of the tunnel.

But for now, I'm still falling.

-Marvin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: One question haunts us in this haunting piece, and that is this one: "I ask why me all the time, but then again why not me?" Are there answers to either one of these questions? The tragic part is that however your answer, it is you. When you think about "hitting bottom," where do you imagine that is? And, wherever it is, how do you plan to start the difficult climb back to the top? You have a good mind, Marvin, so we encourage you to develop it to the fullest, even as you continue to fall. It's so easy in here to play games, to build a protective shell around your heart, to fall prey to the seduction of drama. We hope you put your energy into more productive pursuits so that when you start that return trip, you'll be armed with all the knowledge you can get.

Intelligence Helps

If I had a choice between an intelligent mind and a caring heart, it would be an intelligent mind. I choose this because a caring heart would only get you but so far. There are too many cruel people in the world, and most people would stomp it out.

So being intelligent helps a lot. Being intelligent can help you get out of most situations. It can also get you into a few too. Your intelligence can help you survive if you ever caught up on the streets, or you're in need of something. You can come up with something to get you by.

-Danny, Virginia

From The Beat: Good explanation. In this world you need intelligence but a caring heart can help you along the way too, it could even be what motivates you to be intelligent. Do you think it's intelligent to hustle on the streets knowing that you will get locked up? Do you think it would be more intelligent to ask for help from your community, church, family member or friend if you are in a difficult situation?



The Confessions Of A Sinner

It's hard to say what was the worst tribulation in my life. Through the ages of 8 and 12, I been through a lot of mental abuse to the point where I felt that I didn't have any feelings or trust for my father.

I'm not going to front and say that the worst time in my life is when I got shot at, or somebody snitched on me, or when I almost got caught for something I didn't do.

I'm going to be real and tell you it was family that gave me a mental sickness.

-Anonymous B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We sure wish we knew who the author of this good piece is. We appreciate the honesty in the piece, and we feel the pain that comes from recognizing the limitations of your family. If you are truly mentally ill, whether it comes from family (by way of genetics or patterns of behavior) or from other factors in the environment, there are things that can be done — from talking to adults you trust to therapeutic drugs. Have you actually been diagnosed with a mental illness, or is that your own self-diagnosis?

Remember

I had an experience about a robbery I did. Me, my big bro, we went up in this house an' stole some Gs, about three. We got away, but a neighbor saw us break in. So I was walking the street, actually running. I stopped because I thought the coast was clear, but when I turned around, I heard "Boop, boop!" I started running, but it wasn't no use, because they had cars an' I was running.

My brother broke the other way, so if we did get caught, we would know the same story or won't tell two different stories. But I went to jail.

Now I'm at the Ranch an' I just want to tell my young brothers an' sisters, it's not all about doin' bad shhh, it's about getting a job or taking care of your mom, an' taking care of yourself. So I'd advise y'all to straighten up now, so nothing don't happen to you, something like YA or Colorado or Glen Mills. Y'all need to shape up an' be good. I'm out. RIP, Fred, Fred the Legend

-Joe LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How did your brother react when he found out you was locked up? Are the two of you still close? Are you planning on taking care of your mother when you get out? Does your brother help your mom, too? Your advice to the young ones about getting a job and taking care of your family is wise and wonderful, Joe. Keep on keepin' on!

What Makes Me Mad

I have been told that I rarely do get mad but that's not true. I have a tendency to keep things bottled up inside of my mind for a long period of time. And when my anger is triggered, there is a massive explosion that goes off in my head and is usually released through a fight or a negative exchange of words with someone else.

I get mad mostly for selfish reasons, like if I don't get my way in a situation. I will get mad because I'm used to having things my way. Other than that, I'm usually seen with a smile on my face.

-Unique, Virginia

From The Beat: You are not alone. Check out "Bottled Up Destruction" by Lil' Cell, 150 Crew in the 9.16 Beat. We would like to know why you think you are like this? It helps trace back to the reasons so that you can understand yourself better and if you want, change this behavior. It's good to have a positive attitude but don't let it be a mask to your pain, anger or sadness anymore. How can you learn to open up and express yourself more in a creative and non-destructive way?

My Quiet Cries

(Quiet cries is what I don't show if what I fear inside or I'm sad about on the inside)

My unwanted cases

My cash that I hold

Will never be printed with black faces

Hustling out to make that million,

That's why there is 100 more jails

And 100 less schools for the children

Cigarettes filled with dope

Got my people's lung black and they choke

Ain't got their children school clothes

'Cause they high has them broke.

Exactly why our generation

Has close to no hope

Especially when our own people

Kill our own folks.

These are just a few of my quiet cries...

Lies that made pops cry

'Cause he thought he couldn't get through to me

Things will probably be different

If I didn't grow up on my street

My family lost all trust

As a kid I was shown love

But now I'm shown lust

My mentally is like

Cash is a must

Money will come

Or heads will bust

16-year-olds wear pea coats

Where guns is tucked.

Death is like a crap game

It's random select

It's who's short on their luck

Those are my quiet cries

-Young Stalin B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Unfortunately, we are living in a messed up environment where hope is absent, where violence is present at every moment. If you had the chance to change something in this environment, what would that be? How can you prevent this deadly game from bringing you down?

Caring Keeps You Going

I would love to be intelligent in a lot of things. But I think I'm better at being a caring heart person because I care for everyone. Caring for someone who has done me wrong is hard for me to do but I'm working on it. Like right now I'm going through something. This girl I was going with cheated on me with my best friend. It's like all this came to a shock to me. But the thing is, I still care about her. I know I will say bad things about her but I still care.

Caring is what you really need to keep going in life. Just think about if you didn't care for anyone. How would you be able to like one another? At some point in your life, you're going to care for someone or something. I know, I did but at the wrong time. So don't let it be too late for you.

-Big Bill, Virginia

From The Beat: Great points about caring. You definitely have a caring heart. Although you do not deserve any of this, it helps a relationship if you help yourself and get out of the system so you can be there for your loved ones. We are sorry that these people hurt you. It's good you still care because it's so easy to hate. Feel your sadness and anger though but do not express it destructively no matter what. How can you work through those feelings? How can you be true to your feelings about your girlfriend but at the same time take care of yourself too and prevent more heartache?



All That Brings Me Down

When I choose to give up, it bring' me down
When I'm tired, it bring' me down
Women bring me down
My past bring' me down
Jail bring' me down
Evil bring' me down
Snitches bring me down
But I have to try not to let these things bring me down
Because it can kill me

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for the honesty. You are right. All this madness can really kill your soul. While you're locked up, how do you come back up when you get down? You have shown great skills in your writing and we are sure this helps you sort your thoughts out. We hope wherever you go, you will keep this up! So many people have saved themselves from getting locked up again by just picking up a pen(cil).

This Was My Summer

What's up with it Beat Within, and readers? Fine, I hope. I'm Emmy-Boe for those who don't know me, it's not too many people who don't know me, but I'm alright you can say, even under the circumstances of being locked up, you feel me? But I'm writin' to say how messed up it is to know that I won't be seeing any of this summer, isn't it messed up cuzo? You know who I'm talkin' to, the ninjas who ain't gonna be free over the summer, and what makes it more messed up is some people like myself, birthday (7/25) is in the summer!

You know it's nothin' but on the other hand it is something and the reason I say it's nothin' is because — you do the crime, don't whine, do the time — but the reason it's something is because like myself, I'll be an adult in a couple of months and after this, it's going to be worse, you feel where I'm coming from? I know you do, if you a real person realizing reality.

And to tell you the truth, I don't know where I'm going with this so I'll spit nothin' but the facts, and a fact is I know I was supposed to be shinning this summer for my happy eighteenth birthday. I got a fresh set of dubbs in the closet but no car anymore. My LTD got towed by the weables the night I got cuffed and stuffed.

But I'm going to end this piece with sayin' to all people readin' this, "Get out, stay out, try something new when you get another chance, so the next summer that comes around it'll be yours. And you gotta feel me!"

-Emmy-Boe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you and know all the real people out there will too. You wrote, "It's nothing but on the other hand it is something. You are something, Emmy-Boe. Your life is more precious than you treat it. Your freedom and happiness and other people are more precious than you might believe too. You are facing a lot of time but it ain't over. It's up to you how you will spend your next eight or so years and how you will spend the rest of your life [on the outs we hope.] We know people who have spent more than that in prison, reformed, got released, and they are doing well for themselves and others now. That possibility is always there for you, it's up to you to take it.

Interview With Bad News From The Ranch

BN = Bad News, BW = Beat Within

BW: How you doin' down at the Ranch, Bad News?

BN: Cool.

BW: What do you like about being down at the Ranch?

BN: I'm in an environment around people from San Francisco.

BW: Your homies?

BN: Yeah.

BW: So you're not lonely down here?

BN: Right!

BW: Do you like all the animals running around down here? The deer, raccoons, hawks?

BN: Yeah. There are hella deer down here!

BW: Have you been playing basketball? The Ranch has a great swimming pool. Have you been swimming yet?

BN: Yeah. I play basketball all the time. But I haven't been swimming yet. But I will when they let us swim.

BW: How are you doing on your program?

BN: Cool, but I lost a week — dead time. I cussed out a couple of counselors, letting them know I wasn't no punk, 'cause counselors will try to punk you up here, like I ain't got no rights. They talk to me crazy, like, "Sit down, boy." Tell you they're going to take your points, to keep you down here longer than you're supposed to be. A lot of counselors down here are cool, through. They give you extra phone calls so you can reach your parents, counsel you when you have a problem, instead of docking you points.

BW: What are you going to do when you get out?

BN: I'm going to go back to acting school, but my block's still going to see me, 'cause I'm going to be a star. I'm going to be on TV, do some more commercials. I still got my agent waitin' on me. I want to make my own movie about my family — a comedy. People like my brother and sister, cappin' on each other. I'd like to be in a movie, like "Air Flight", or maybe a stand-up comedy, like Bernie Mack. I like Chris Rock, Dave Chapelle and Eddie Murphy, but I wouldn't want to be in Eddie Murphy's movie, 'cause there'd be too much competition. He'd get all the money off my moves. Eddie can be in my movie.

-Bad News LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Everybody says you're a great comedian and that they'd love to see you act. So are you going to be able to focus on acting school while kicking it on the block? Can you write a TV script about what you have learned about the streets that would teach your audience that Juvy ain't nothing nice nor a place they ever want to go? You're very versatile. We hope you get to express your imagination in any way you want through your acting. Great luck!

Intelligent Mind Or Caring Heart

If I had the choice, an intelligent mind is what I would choose
Because a caring heart would just get broken and abused

And as I learn, my knowledge would get the size of an elephant

All because I was provided with intelligence

Now I'm having second thoughts about a caring heart too

So I think to myself, what can a caring heart do?

A caring heart can bring cheer or maybe joy to my life

And maybe down the road it could bring me a baby boy and a wife

But if I really had to choose, what it would be

An intelligent heart and a caring mind would seem perfect to me

Think about it

-Avery, Virginia

From The Beat: Good thing you don't have to choose one over the other. You make a good point when you look at the importance of both. Caring can definitely cause pain but if you know how to care with an open and understanding heart, it won't be so bad. Putting up walls around your heart can lead to a lonely life. Intelligence is the ability to use your knowledge, so without it, it would be hard to stay out of the system. Aim for both!



What Brings Me Up

not too many things
bring me down
because i like to do things
that only bring me up
or sometimes
bring me to the middle
don't ask what
brings you down
ask what
brings me up
i'm always happy that way
'cause i can always say
i bring myself up
i'm what brings me up

-Nathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem sings and brings us up to think about things that make us grin for a min'. Thank you, young friend.

Broken Heart

i remember when we used to
take our long walks to the park
until you broke my heart
i remember when we used to
sit on the hill and just chill
while the cold wind hit our skin
as the sun came down
until you broke my heart
i remember when we used to
hang out wit' our folk
and just choke
off that hah you-know
until you broke my heart
i remember when we used to
play truth or dare
while i played in yo' afro hair
until you broke my heart
why did you have to
break my heart from the start
now that we are apart
i have a broken heart
why did you break it from the start

-Broken-heart La, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've been writing the most beautiful love lyrics. Thanks for sharing, so all can hear it, even those with a broken-hearted spirit. Strange how sad words sound like sweet music when heard.

My Absence Brings Me Down Most

What brings me down? There's a whole lot — lot being home with my daughter or my future wife and not knowing when I'm going to get out, or not knowing how much time I'm about to get. My lawyer not telling me what kind of deal they are trying to offer me. He just wants to take it to trial but really I think we are going to lose.

You know I trained myself, hoping it will look better for me, hoping they can really see I didn't mean to do what I did, and see that I am not a bad person. They think I'm a bad person because what they read. They don't care that I have a nine-month old daughter at home that needs me. That's what brings me down the most.

I would like to say I love you Maressa and Gabriella and don't believe every thing people say.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's really hard on you not being there. It seems as if everything the system does is against us. But if you look towards the future and hope for the best, what you want will happen no matter how long it takes. Stay strong for your family and self. Think about the reasons you weren't there for your family when you were out. Figure all of that out in the meantime, and start preparing yourself.

Hurting My Feelings

when people hurt my feelings
i try to be concealing
but pain is revealing
as tears flow down my face
i just think in my mind
why is it my time i waste
with people and thei' disgrace
when i think about my past
i wonder how long i could last
i wish you would see the things i faced
it's a true story, on my life it's based
it's a long story though
and some people think it's thei' time i waste
it's my hurt feelings that i just found
that brings me down

-Tyresha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have nothing but time and space; your story in our pages would be anything but a waste! Give it a try. It it's too long, then serialize — one short chapter each week, on Tyresha's life, what she had to do and see on her journey toward being free. Meanwhile, thanks for all the poetry!

A Love That I Had

I just had a love for me, but now I don't anymore — just because I told her, "Let's break up!" Now it is too late to have her back. But I wish that I could have her back!

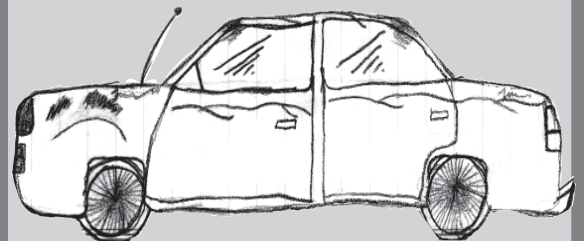
I was so nice to her. I would give her money to go to school, and walk with her, and buy her anything that she wanted so she would be happy! But now she let me go, and I'm lonely and sad all day just thinking of how me, her, and friends, used to kick it and have fun.

I just think about all the happy times we had. I was always happy when I was with her. Now I'm just lonely without her. I think it's just hard to keep going on and on with my life alone.

I just wish she would give me a chance to go back with her. Even if she asked me to go and die just to be with her, I would! But then I would be dead by that time, so it would be no use to die to be with her. So I go on living, and I hope one day we will be together again. If we're not together, I will miss you for a long, long time, Gen.

-Lil' Thai, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for confiding in The Beat about your love. Maybe you can learn a valuable lesson from this, 'cause you definitely need to work on impulse control. Even over small things, you get so angry that you might say anything in the heat of passion. If you can't stop the feelings, you can at least stop how you're dealing with them. Walk away, let some time pass, cool off and calm down. Then when you come back around, you might not say something you'll regret later. Don't give up hope on Gen, but practice other ways to handle your feelings. Then if you see her again, it won't have the same end.





Standouts

Tell On Somebody

i never tell on nobody
you can get killed on the spot
telling on somebody is not okay
i will never tell on nobody
because i do not want to get killed
telling on somebody is not good to do
one of my friends got killed
for telling on someone on the spot
people have died for telling on somebody
they think it's okay for some people
to tell on somebody
so they will not get in trouble
or go to juvenile
and people do tell a lot
not to go to juvenile
if somebody kill a kid
and the boy that kill the kid
he got away but
another boy got caught
and he went to juvenile
and the police ask him some questions
and he tell on his friends
to get out of juvenile
then the boy that got away
he got caught the next day
and he went to juvenile
and he got a phone call
and he called one of his brothers
and tell him — "kill
the boy that tell on me"
and the boy get killed
the next day
so — never tell

-Donnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We understand what you're saying, even if we're praying for justice and truth to overcome a world of darkness where killers run everyone on the street by the rule of a gun and its bullets speed. It's not hard to understand, if you see a friend die for what he said — you're not going to want to be the next one dead! So another killer goes free instead.

Listen Up

To those who are 16-17 years of age and are facing felony charges, you better start thinking hard, because if the judge don't like you — then you won't be in Juvenile Hall, Camp, not even CYA. You'll be where I'm headed.

I'm headed to San Quentin for two years and I'm only seventeen-and-a-half years old and I'm already facing adult lockup because the judge don't like everyone. So don't screw up in your late teens because once you enter the pin' — you might as well forget your past and your future.

-Lil' M, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You make a whole lot of sense. How do you think the judge actually decides whether to send the youngster to CYA or the pinta? Why do you think they send youngsters to the pin?

Thinking Brings Me Down

A lot things bring people down, but what brings me down is thinking I can't stay outta trouble long enough to get out of the system.

I also get down from my negative behavior and I sometimes bring others down with my negative outlook on certain situations — sometimes even positive.

I am out of time, till next time.

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's an old saying that goes like this, "Beware of your thoughts, for they become your character." You don't want to be a walking bag of negative energy. Think positive (at least try.) And keep yo' head up!

I Speak To The Ghetto

If I could give a speech, I would speak to the thugs out there hustling fo' their money.

It's so dangerous out in those turf streets! You are unprotected, so anything can happen at any given time. Only the police will protect you, if you let them handcuff you up and take you to jail so that you won't be around thugs and killers that would harm you.

You also have to think twice because yo' life is on the line every time you on the block hustling. I'm just saying — be careful what you wish for or what you're doing at any given time. The block will always be there. But what about you?

-Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great advice! Everybody else says: I didn't make the world; I can't change the world. Then you say: the block will always be there, but what about you? The world will take your life away if a thug continues to play a game with killers! And jail protects you for a minute, but you don't want to spend your life up in it. The best way to be careful — is quit that scandalous bit. That's it.

The block will always be there. But what about you?

What Brings Me Down

What brings me down is me bringing myself into this situation. Another thing that brings me down is that I don't think my life is going the way it should and could. But I just got to strive to do better and things will get better.

Another thing that brings me down is that my family is goin' through hard times, and I'm in here goin' through my lil' whatever. I want to call it quits. Being in here every day brings me down, but I got to look at the bigger picture and know that this is not forever, so that's what just keeps me goin'.

It's a lot stuff that brings me down, but I just pray to God and for sure he will make it better

-Dante, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's a light at the end of every tunnel. Sometimes we learn the biggest lessons in our darkest days. And maybe all this is happening to you for a reason. What kind of advice would you give to someone who claimed they couldn't cope with their situation anymore?

Depression

what brings me down
is depression
and when i see
one of my friends is hurt
or in trouble
what brings me down
is when i see
one of my friends
depressed or upset
what brings me down
is when i see
one of my friends fighting
and getting beat on

-Marcel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel how you see your friends as your family. If you can separate that from criminal activity, you'll be a true friend to them in the end. Keep your head up.



Rocks Ain't Cool

slanging rocks ain't cool
but i thought i had to
bust them knocks
and go recop
and be on the block
with everybody
running from the cops
and somebody
always busting a glock
i thought if i
slang rocks
i could go recop
a bentley on dub-deuces
rolling through the turf
looking stub
but here i am at camp sweeney
where it ain't no rocks
to slang to no knocks
and it ain't no bentley
on dub-deuces
so whatever you do
just stay in school
because slanging
rocks ain't cool

-On the map, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You were on the map for a minute. Now the system got you up in it. But they let you off easy, doing your time at Camp Sweeney, with weekends at home. So use your dome — and leave those rocks alone!

Cry Myself to Sleep

what brings me down
is being in here
in the hall
looking at these four walls
wondering how
i put myself in this situation
in here listening to people
telling me what to do
brings in more complication
they act like they care
but they really don't
'cause they don't know
the time i'm facing
as i lay down at night
i'm crying myself to sleep
'cause i'm so angry
and i get so weak
i wake up in the morning
filled with pain
sometimes i just can't explain

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To be a teen, facing years away from your scene, has got to make the pain feel keen and sharp as a knife! What can you do but survive, accept your situation as a fact of life, and strive to see what got you in this plight. Then work on your heart and soul, to make sure you'll never again be in a place so cold. When you feel that change within — a better future will begin.

Mistake

Man, it's so cold out here for a young black brother. I just was about to get released from Camp and I caught another case. The thing was the dude that's supposed to be my potna picked me up in a stolen car and I was riding around with them for a minute. Then we parked in the back of this building, so I took it upon myself to pull to the front because this dude who worked next door at the at the pizza place was just looking at me.

So when I got in the front seat and begin to drive, I saw the car was stolen. So my two friends get in and the one that picked me up drives off and parks back in the back of the building again. So I get out to leave so I won't get in trouble, trying to avoid another case and the police stop me and arrest me.

My mistake was that I was supposed to be at home instead of with my friends, and if I would have been home, I would be at Camp instead of the Hall. So don't be like me and do something you might regret.

-Young Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for your words of good advice. Do you think that next time your friends roll up — you'll think twice? What have you learned from this experience you're going through? How can you make sure that this doesn't again happen to you?

Overcoming The Worst

dark gray clouds
midnight moon
lurkin' over the bay
steppin' over heroin needles
in the streets of san jose
cold blob
purple heart
nose stiff as a hog
nervous system twitchin'
wit' a mind full'a
cat-piss fog
not aware of my
surroundings
'cause i let my mind
slip free
coming up in the cuts
behind me
is my punk enemies
blood pumpin' they buckin'
i'm duckin' i'm runnin'
they comin' ears ringin'
bullets is singin'
as they caught my ass slippin'
hittin' corners stumblin'
i'm fumblin'

wit' the keys to my jeep
crack open the door
jump in an' hide
under the seat
i see the shadows comin'
but they keep goin'
an' pass me by

take a moment to catch my breath
and thank god for an extra life
but they can't hold me down
'cause i stand tall for myself
there's going to be more
experiences

but i put this one on my life shelf

-Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is written with your usual virtuosity, stacking images and feelings with poetic ferocity as words speed with maximum mental velocity. But we hope this is only part one of your "speech" — 'cause part two still needs to reach that higher vision from which you do not merely escape a dangerous position but see through the drug-induced hypnotic scene that keeps you trapped in a life-threatening dream-like illusion — i.e., if you don't escape your confusion and quit your life of crime, you will not overcome but just defer the tragic outcome till next time. Your street life is an open wound, from which you must heal — and soon!

My Daughter

There's a whole lot passing me by right now like watching my daughter grow up, day by day week by week. Months go by and I can't be there to hear her first words and see her first steps.

I just hate knowing I can't see these things or not being able to have a job or take my daughter and my future wife to do nice things. That's why I hope the judge and DA can give me one more chance and please don't send me to CYA so I can show and prove to them that I'm really not a bad person. Well there's a lot more to say but I have to go.

-Matt, 150 crew

From The Beat: Matt, the love you have for your child is a source of strength for you — you are so lucky to have that! No matter what the judge decides, your strengths are your own and no one can take them from you. If you know and believe you are a good person, then you will act like a good person and people will recognize that through your whole life. We wish you and your family the best.



What Brings Me Up And To The Middle

not too many things
bring me down
because i like to do things
that only bring me up
or sometimes
bring me to the middle
don't ask what
brings you down
ask what
brings me up
i'm always happy that way
'cause i can always say
i bring myself up
i'm what brings me up

-Nathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem sings and brings us up to think about things that make us grin for a min'. That is wise that you will focus on being up and even just being in the middle! Thank you, young friend.

How I Got Caught

What's up? This Young Gato once again. I'm back here for a weak violation. It happened on Friday.

I was kickin' it at the pad, solo. My lil' homie came through my house because there was hella cops out in the 'hood. And he started showing me his pistol that he had just got from the older homie. Once I held that pistol, I should've known I was coming to this place!

A second later, the phone rings. I pick it up and it's my homie. He told me that there was some funk on the other side of town. So I said, "Let's ride!" And we went out there several cars deep.

We never found the fools that we were looking for, but the car I was in got pulled over. And my homie had his strap! And I was on home supervision.

So they took me and my homies in and we came in here six deep. Now I'm the only one still here. Everyone else got released because it was their first time. But they kept me since I've been here hella times.

So now I'm going to Camp, but I ain't trippin'. I'll be back in the 'hood. I'm out for now. To all the homies, stay up!

-Young Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You said it right. When you touched that pistol, you should've known to stay home that night. If you go riding looking for trouble, you'll find it for sure — just maybe not the trouble you were looking for. And yeah, you can tell yourself you just got unlucky that night; but even if you see it as a roll of the dice, keep rolling them and you're bound to lose some nights! The Camp can be one more stop in route to the penitentiary or the Y — or it can be your last, best chance to give real change a try!

People Get Killed

what brings me down
is when i see people get killed
sometimes it is my friends getting killed
and i can't do nothing about it
all i can say is r i p
to all my friends that passed away
that' what brings me down

-Diandre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't do anything directly to stop a friend from getting killed in the street, but you can indirectly do your part to bring an end to the killing that you see. Show the world and your friends how to win by getting out that game while you still can! RIP to all those folks that died needlessly in the street.

Constant Fumbled Feelings

let it burn
it's my turn
to show what's real
if it was me
messin' with another chick
how it make you feel
i don't have a confession
i'm just left guessin'
while you beating around the bush
it was my heart you was testin'
and they say still waters run deep
that's how i feel now
through the whole situation
i am still wondering how
how can someone act like they care
put on a front
but once you're not there
they would throw up so much dust
an' break all your trust
i thought it was love
but it was just lust
i'm gon' stop here
'cause if i continue
it would take all day
i mean
man i'm hurt
and have so much to say
my feelings constantly
get played with like i'm some kind of toy
i'm over you and crying now
but now these are tears of joy
but you not concerned
you had your turn
but when you learn
just let it burn
and deal with your emotions
you caught my lips on fire
and now you want me to swallow an ocean

-Lil' Cell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Poetic and deep! When someone betrays you, it's your feelings that slay your love, till tears from your eyes are so mixed with disappointment and lies that heartbreak and joy come together and to destroy peace of mind. Joy that you're set free from the lies, but heartbreak 'cause you loved a disguise! You will find someone you can trust and open up to again, until then work on yourself and loving you.

To Be Or Not To Be

What's up with this life? The life I'm living got me nowhere. Now what am I to do?

Stuff got me trippin'. I don't know weather it's the homies or if it's life's obstacles. Sometimes I'll be thinking, "Damn! What if I get out of this life? Will I be happy then, or will I be stressin' even more?" For one thing, I like being with the homies doing all I do. I go to school, but it ain't helping me, and I'm way behind in credits.

I'm not a real social person, but I don't know weather it's my personality or the life holding me back. Sometimes I would wonder where I would be in life if I didn't: smoke, drink, and do dirt. I would think I probably be in college doing something fun like... Well, I don't know.

But now the life is bringing me juvenile hall time and camp time. But I ain't trippin'. The clock is tickin', only time will tell. I have to decide weather I'm going to keep going or I'm going to stop.

-Alv., San Mateo

From The Beat: If you "keep going" where do you think you'll be in a year? In five years? Is that where you want to be? If it isn't, we think you should give some serious thought to changing your life. We know that you're capable of whatever you set your mind to, so we wonder why you'd set your mind to continuing a course of action that returns you to captivity again and again. Keep doing what you've been doing, and you'll keep experiencing the same consequences. Change your behavior, and you will change the outcome.



Falling
if i slip
will you save me
from falling
if i were grinding
and fell off
would you get me back
to balling
in my life
i've had my spills
feeling like i was
so far down
in a hole
dark
moist
and can't get out
trapped
becoming a victim
of my own demise
each day i rise
with the ambition
to climb

dirt
under my nails
and dust
in my eyes
can't stop dreaming
so i won't stop
trying
all i see
in the belly
of the beast
are the stars
that shine so bright
some say
reach for the stars
because that's
what we are
but what about
if you look beyond
to the watchers
my rhymes about life
are heart-stoppers
how do i stop
from falling

is the only question
i ask
finally made it
so the palms of my hands
can feel the grass
as i climb out
of this six-foot ditch
i thank god
for granting my wish
as the gravestone reads
rest in peace
god's speed

-Ben, 150 Crew
From The Beat: Your rhymes are heart-stoppers! Or maybe more like those electric shockers that start a heart back to life! Yet it's not about balling, not if you mean stunting on the grind, 'cause that's just a set-up to die or do more time. But when you look beyond the stars to "the watchers" at their stations, that's a mighty leap of imagination! So pull yourself out the grave dug by a devil and rise beyond the starry skies to the wisdom behind the watchers' eyes! Now if you want to call that balling, then thank God — you found your calling!

My Speech: Get Better

homegirls and homeboys
you are reading these pages today
to really see how many people
have the same problem as yourself
well, as you can tell
there are a lot
we have all had some
bad experiences in our lives
that have in part shaped
who we are and how we act
i myself choose not
to write or talk
about my worst experience
i'd rather take it as a lesson
learn instead of talking about it
i would rather leave it in the past
and continue to look towards the future
also keep your head up
better things are sure to come

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If we learn from the mistakes of yesterday, better things will come our way. And if we're willing to share the lesson, then we can share the blessing. But then, sometimes we're not learning the right lesson at all, and we need someone else to tell us before our next fall.

**instead of
talking about it
i would rather
leave it in
the past**

Droppin' Dimes

How to define snitching, dropping the dime, etc? When is it cool or not cool to drop the dime? Why it's cool?

When a person drops the dime, it usually depends on the situation or what they looking forward to. But it's not cool to do any type of dime dropping unless you don't want to be blamed for something you didn't do. But basically, do as you feel and go with your heart, because doing that — you can never go wrong. 'Cause a heart don't send mixed messages because it can't even talk — it knows what it knows, so you can't go wrong.

When a person drops the dime on a heavy hitter — shoot, he involves his life, so you have to say, "Is my life worth some information?" And do your family want you to provide your life for some information? There's a lot of situations you have to consider in life. What is life at its highest point? But shoot, it's a lot of give and take to telling.

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that if more people followed their heart — they would get in less trouble? Do you remember a time when you didn't follow your heart? What are the consequences of not following your heart? Nice job looking at the issue of telling from several angles.

Just Another Day

it's just another day in the hall
it's another day of staff and four walls
it's another day with the next man's draw's
it's another day i can't grind
it's another day of room time
it's another day to stand on squares
it's another day that i just don't care
it's another day without my mother
it's another day my sister doesn't have her brother
it's another day with no love to ease the hurt
it's another day with friends in the dirt
it's just another day with not much to say
just another day in the big east bay

-Lil' Leo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't dream of going back to the grind! Have you lost your mind? That road leads to incarceration. Don't let daily frustration make you forget the choice you need to be making: it's time to change your ways — get free and stay!



One And Only Thing That Brings Me Down

The one and only thing that brings me down is the memory of those who have passed on. The death of my mother truly kills me. Thinking about the good times we used to have to the last moments of her life. This doesn't only break me down but right away it gets me mad.

Also remembering about the one of many homies I thought of as a brother, Jesse. Remembering the high-speed chase, then the crash. Next thing the police surrounding us trying to get us out the wrecked truck. Me being stuck looking at my homie as he bleeds to death from a knock out blow to his head.

Yes, my memories of those I lived my life next to and now they are gone. This also is what brings me down, pisses me off.

-Lil' José, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are deeply sorry about losing your mom and Jesse. Actually seeing a loved one die or dying is a very traumatic experience. You will be able to better move through the grief if you do not hide this sadness with anger. We know you are a strong young man but being strong also means being strong enough to face how you really feel. We wish you the best and hope you honor your mom and Jesse's memory by living a better life.

My Life's Story

I grew up in a bad neighborhood in a city called Hayward. When I was three years old, my daddy moved to New York with a woman. When I was four years old, I moved to Oakland with my mother.

One day my mother went to the laundromat for one hour. This man started to kick on the door, so my babysitter opened it. I was lying on the floor, playing with my toys. He told her to go to the room and then he started to touch her. I was so little at the time. He asked her if she had a gun and she told him yes. He started to rape her, then he ran out of the back door. She called the cops and my mother, I didn't know what to say, I was crying.

When I got older it turned my life upside down. I went to a therapist for help; it helped a little bit — I started drawing people getting hurt. Two years later, I moved with my grandmother. My daddy called me and said he was getting out of jail, so I was happy. He told me to send him some money to get back California. I did. The money came back; he just wanted the money for himself. I got mad and said I'm going to kill myself, because I was hurt. I tried to hurt myself, so I cut my arm. They sent me to the hospital so I could get some help.

As I got older, I started acting like a bad kid, because I never had someone to help me in life, therefore I decided to be a gang member to find the man to help me to be a man. It didn't help me. I started to come to jail. My PO said I was going to a group home called Lincoln Child Center at the time.

My mother and I had a fight, so she said I was not her child. She hurt my feelings. I told her, don't talk to me in your life. She moved out of town. I then looked for a family. It was hard, but I did it.

I didn't talk to my mama for a year. She then called me and said I am so sorry for doing that to you. We started to talk again. I always wanted to be a family. Then one day I walked outside and saw my brother smoking some pot. I asked him if I can smoke some, he said hell no, so I saved some money to get some pot. I thought it was just funny. I got me kicked out of school. I started robbing people just for fun for my friends, and myself.

When my friend got murdered, I was all by myself. I got my first car when I was fourteen years old. This man was selling the car for \$500. I asked him to test drive it and he said yes and he never saw his car no more. It was a Z28 Camaro. To be continued . . .

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Daam, homie, you've been through some really hard times. But remember, it's not the struggle that defines our character, but the way we deal with our struggle. Your pain is actually what makes you strong. If you had gotten the right help at the right time, do you think you'd be in a different situation? Do you ever think of how you don't like to be hurt when you're hurting others? How do you think the man felt when you stole his car? Do you think you would treat people better if you started to feel happier yourself?

Life Brings Me Down

what brings me down is life
not living — but dealing
with things that happen in life
like the loss of a loved one
and not having a real family
my father died
when i was ten years old
i never knew my mother
i only met her three or four times
i was raised by my grandmother
and she died two years ago
that's what brings me down
but when i think about all that
i just tell myself
shhh happen sometimes
that you can't change
so just move on
and don't let it mess up your life
or the way you feel about life
because one day you will die
and the pain will stop
and you will go to a better place
if you have lived a good life

-Gino, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you do right, you will see some blessings come your way in this life. You've had more than your share of pain already, but if you can just hold steady, walk through the pain without letting it mess up your brain to the point of not caring — there will be love in your life for you to be sharing; as sure as your grandmother is sending you love from up in heaven above!

I started robbing people just for fun

The Worst Thing

one day when me
and my brothers
were walking down
the street
some guys come up to us
and they pulled out guns
and they pointed them
at us
and they was
trying to go through
our pockets
but they didn't find
no money
so then they
put the guns up
and walked away
i was scared
but god was
with us
that's how we overcame

-Lamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God was in you, and helped you be cool, even though you were scared. And God was in the others, too, who put up their guns and walked away. What they did wasn't right, but everyone went home to sleep that night. Now, let's just pray they throw those guns away.



Dreams

it was a dark
and stormy night
not a candle
was lit
there was no light
everyone
was sleeping
in their beds
and everyone
was dreaming
dreams
in their heads
some were dreaming
of candy
others of sheep
some were dreaming
of funnies
other times
they'd weep

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a way of making fairytale rhymes, dip suddenly into an adult world of pain and crying. And then we see your fairytales as a brief escape from a grim reality.

**take a
moment to
catch my
breath**

I Don't Know

Life as a teen
We all seen as
Hoodlums and crooks.
Some of us do
Like to write
And read books.
We all ain't thieves and thugs.
Yeah, we might sag
But we all don't slang dope.
We might spit flows
But all don't smoke 'dro.

-Fo'Thirty, San Mateo

From The Beat: The prejudice you describe against teenagers is not new, but that doesn't make it right, either. Apparently, it's easier not to have to evaluate individual human beings as long as we can lump them into a group — teens, blacks, whites, Asians, gays, Christians, Arabs, adults, cops. That way, we never have to think about them as people. It's a real problem. How do you think we can overcome this limitation?

False Accusations

The worst experience I ever had, when I look back on it, was when I got blamed for setting a house on fire. It felt so bad because I didn't do it — but they made me believe that I did do it even though I really didn't!

I'm in here right now for robbery. I pleaded innocent, because I didn't have anything to do with it! I was in a whole different area from where they said I was.

But once I said that I didn't do anything and had started talking back to the police officer, he took me to the ground! Then he choked me out and I passed out! When I woke up, I was in the back seat of a police car.

-Rasheed, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those both sound like truly frightening, disturbing, upsetting — bad experiences! Why do you think they came after you? Have you ever started fires? Have you ever committed a robbery? We're not saying what happened to you was right, but we're wondering why it happened to you at all.

Overcoming The Worst

dark gray clouds
midnight moon
lurkin' over the bay
steppin' over heroin needles
in the streets of san jose
cold blob
purple heart
nose stiff as a hog
nervous system twitchin'
wit' a mind full'a
cat-piss fog
not aware of my
surroundings
'cause i let my mind
slip free
coming up in the cuts
behind me
is my punk enemies
blood pumpin' they buckin'
i'm duckin' i'm runnin'
they comin' ears ringin'
bullets is singin'
as they caught my ass slippin'
hittin' corners stumblin'
i'm fumblin'
wit' the keys to my jeep
crack open the door
jump in an' hide
under the seat
i see the shadows comin'
but they keep goin'
an' pass me by
take a moment to catch my breath
and thank god for an extra life
but they can't hold me down
'cause i stand tall for myself
there's going to be more experiences
but i put this one on my life shelf

-Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is written with your usual virtuosity, stacking images and feelings with poetic ferocity as words speed with maximum mental velocity. But we hope this is only part one of your "speech" — 'cause part two still needs to reach that higher vision from which you do not merely escape a dangerous position but see through the drug-induced hypnotic scene that keeps you trapped in a life-threatening dream-like illusion — i.e., if you don't escape your confusion and quit your life of crime, you will not overcome but just defer the tragic outcome till next time. Your street life is an open wound, from which you must heal — and soon!

That Brings Me Down

when people hurt my feelings
i try to be concealing
but pain is revealing
as tears flow down my face
i just think in my mind
why is it my time i waste
with people and thei' disgrace
when i think about my past
i wonder how long i could last
i wish you would
see the things i faced
it's a true story
on my life it's based
it's a long story though
and some people think
it's thei' time i waste
it's my hurt feelings t
hat i just found
that brings me down

-Tyresha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have nothing but time and space; your story in our pages would be anything but a waste! Give it a try. It's too long, then serialize — one short chapter each week, on Tyresha's life, what she had to do and see on her journey toward being free. Meanwhile, thanks for all the poetry!





Standouts

Pastor J-Wizzle And Lil' Ray's Page

Love Lasts Forever

dedicated to Lil' Mama Hanna
you must have liked my writings
but it seems to me
your feelings you're hiding
despite that you used my words
you must be in love
but trust this
those are my feelings from
the past
from that first
my only love
now leaves me hurt
to enjoy real love
you got to make sacrifices
showing your pain
should be one of your vices
lil' mama girl
you crazy
but my words in true depth
can be shady
so hey
trust and believe
love lasts forever

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've never read a more generous or gracious response to the act of someone taking your words and putting their name at the end like a fact. You're the first to see, that the copiers mean that your words speak their feelings. But then you see deeper than that, and tell Hanna she's hiding her hurt behind a mask provided by this poem about your past. Whether or not that was true, she writes poems from her heart now, like you.



Through Hell

dedicated to Traviesa
see i know that you
done been through hell
sittin' in those
six by nine cells
no one to talk to
so you could spill your feelings
your passion for acceptance
is what's killing
lil' mama, i know
i done been through
my share of hell too
but reading pieces in The Beat
such as yours
has given me
inspiration and hope
traviesa i wish for the day
i still had a dad
but you
you curse him out 'cause you're mad
ain't it a shame
but you thought it was your fault
and took the blame
it's all the same
just one game
but this shhh it's so lame
so baby girl don't feel lonely
and don't give up
we gonna make it through
just me and you
pray

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Traviesa has finally been released from the Hall to make her time count in a placement on the outs. From what we hear she's doing well, but we've yet to hear the tale she'll tell. We hope to hear from her soon, so we can send her this poem from you — 'cause everything you say is true; and she deserves to see the powerful effect of her heartfelt poetry on you. We thank you both for what you write: 'cause you keep hope alive!

Drama

I can't get away from all this drama surroundin' me, houndin' me, my brain, my name, these demons seem to be followin' me. They come in all shapes and sizes, enemies, my friends. I don't appreciate it, but they rather stay back in the ghetto. But oh well, if that's how you want it, forget it, go ahead. But don't mess with me. I'm up in this thang, and I wish they would leave me alone before I show the other side of me.

But hey, that's how it be, they don't want me to get violent. If my so-called ex-friends wanna try me, startin' riots, that's how we like it, you all invited. I'll get it so heated; you'll feel the temperature rise. So heated we spit back flames, front page articles, all the police could find of them phonies was particles. I'm down to stand on the front line and get wild, one of the first to get up and get down, you don't want to see the anger inside of me, and just keep my composure and maintain the best way I know how, and pray and keep my faith.

But when I finally snap, I'm 'a mess up your sister, your daddy, your momma, your brother, if he wants some drama, come on.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We see a lot of anger in this piece. Where do you think your anger comes from? Sometimes we find when we are angry, the anger actually comes from a deeper place than what's going on in that moment. Like say you're having big problems with your lady or family and someone says something to you and you snap. That person might not have been the cause of your anger, but they're who you direct your anger at. Ya feel? If you dig deeper to find the bigger problem, you might be able to address that issue and the petty stuff won't get to you.

Real Feelings

dedicated to Tishay
i wanna thank you
for everything
that you have written
it makes my pain
easier found
so now i can sleep
with peace
because tishay's words
feel as though
they came from me
i feel the same way
at times by god
he feels my hard times
keeps my faith
because without it
is no other way
tishay and pastor's life
grab a mixing bowl
one part life tishay
one part life pastor
two parts heart
one part determination and courage
lastly three parts hope
mix it all together
and you get
tishay and pastor's life
lil' mama, our lives
are pretty much the same
because you're gonna label you
a goddamn fool
pray

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When in the pages of The Beat, two souls seeking salvation meet, and in each other's words see, a path to surviving reality while striving to be truly free to thrive in outside society, it's almost like a dream, a providential scheme, born of the courage to be a writer of poetry that tells the heart's own truth, and the faith to see the pain you feel will yet be healed, if you — pray like it all depends on God and act like it all depends on you! We thank you Pastor, and Tishay does, too.

Real Hustle

Come follow me into my life, I'm a young hustler.
It's just to get paid as I stay clean away from bustas.
Strugglin' in my blood, my mentality's thug.
But in reality, I'm messed up.
I got to go get me this, I gotta go out and get the rent paid.
So I'm gonna be out here on this block with these rocks and this glock until I profit.
"Could you stop it" is what my mom used to say.
I tell her, "Until I see us livin' better, I got to be this way."
But it don't look like I'll be goin' nowhere,
looks like I'm stuck in this ghetto.
Even though I got this dreams of bein' famous,
my time is runnin' short and if I don't make it by the end of the year,
things is gonna be changing and I'm gonna be dangerous.
Snatchin' chains and I'm gonna start sharin' my pain.
But it's sad — the things we do for the dollar bill, huh?
But, I gotta make better, I ain't trying to hustle forever.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you don't plan to hustle forever, but you have to decide to get you your life together soon. Life doesn't wait for anyone, no matter who you are. You have to get on life's train and make sure you go far. Don't settle for second best, challenge yourself to reach the top. And once you reach success — don't stop!



Tishay's Page

They Never Understood

what brings me down
is when someone hurts my heart
and when they lie to me
it tears me apart
when i don't have someone to comfort me
that's when i'm lonely
when i need a friend besides one an' only
it brings me down
to face a lot of unfairness
knowing i wasn't expecting it to my awareness
and when i'm away from my family
'cause they're the only people who truly
love my surroundings
it brings me down when people pull me
and for people to say they knew me
but they never understood me

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say a lot, but we're gonna focus on one little spot: expect the best of yourself, but not as much from anyone else; and don't compromise to win a prize from another. Keep your eyes on you and don't run for cover. Then when you feel down, you'll soon find yourself up off the ground and back in stride, full of pride 'cause you stayed true — to you!

Thank You, Pastor J-Wizzle

pastor j-wizzle's and tishay's life
may be on the same page
i know if that's true
we're both feeling overage
thank you for the comments
i show all appreciation
we all grew up in a life full of complications
now to you —
i've read your poetry too
and i felt it as though i really knew you
i know you feel the loneliness and pains
with you-i-we'll stay strong
and we'll both continue to maintain
nothing less but much more
preach till you can't anymore
but much respect to you and your words
to pastor j-wizzle
going to him from her
i'm so proud that reading my poetry
relaxes you and helps you sleep peacefully
and that it has touched you in many ways
i'm so surprised and shocked
there's no more that i can say but
thanks a lot

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When writers touch each other's hearts and minds, to support each other through hard times, we feel The Beat is at its best! And when they attest to the powerful effects of each others' words, the spirit of our 'zine flies on angels' wings to heaven's doors which then open to send blessings and praise where it's due — to you and Pastor J-Wizzle, too! You are the wise and compassionate spirit of The Beat, the strongest reason there is to ink on these sheets each and every week.

Let Me

let me hold your heart
i'll do it with care
let me lead you to a beautiful place
do you want to go
i'll take you there
let me tell you about my life and how it is
let me tell you about my first love
do you want to hear
'cause it's something i fear
let me show you things you never knew
'cause you could teach me things
and i can teach you too
let's make friends
it's the best thing
but no one knows it's meaning
with you i could learn what it means
let me tell you all my secrets
only if you promise to keep them
let me shed my tears
from all the years i held them back
let me make up for all
the things i lacked
let me take your hand
'cause if you ever need a friend
let me

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true that few recognize what friendship can do. Beyond the heat of romantic passion, it can fashion a home for the heart — and safe at home you can start to face your fears on your own. Thanks for a beautiful and delicate poem on friendship, life's greatest cure for the heartsick.

After The Pain

i wanted to cry yesterday
but i couldn't
the pain that was pondering
said i wouldn't
my heart is so sore
that i can't feel it anymore
i sit on my bed and listen to the beat
wondering next time i talk
what words will i speak
truly feeling weak
sometimes i just lay up and think
and all the aches sink
it'll all be over when
i'm not topped with pink
i'll be able to live my life
as beautiful as i can be
after the pain

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say, when girls go to YA, it's not as long as on the boys' side; and when they return for evaluation, they're rarely sent back to the Y. Maybe it doesn't really help to know this when you're doing the time, and every day stretches farther than the heart can find an end to, till you're heartsore through and through. But the heart is full of miracles, too! And your poetry shows you can see all the way to that beautiful day after the pain of has faded away.

Feel Me

seems my life
has passed fast
losin' to takin'
snakin' to thinkin'
it ain't gon' last
i laugh out loud
but really hurtin'
deep down inside
feeling vibes
of the aches i cry
it's the devil in disguise
in my eyes
i wonder why
this grime
chose my side
i didn't invite
this stranger
to come an' ruin my life
but i gotta keep it tight
turn around
keep movin'
till i get it right
'cause this person
ain't gon' push me
an' have me fall off twice
i know i'm betta than that
that's why i gotta stay
ahead of this cat
so many people trippin'
i'm knowin'
who's bound to slip next
i flexed
before i hit the ground
i caught myself
maybe i was expecting
worse before anything else
i pulled so many things my way
it tugged war back to me
but i'm still standin'
through it all on my feet
can't get caught about bein' weak
i'm gon' stay strong
no matter what's wrong
feel me
peace

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The devil in disguise is someone with a mouth full of sweet lies, trying to make you compromise what you know is right and have you doing what you know is wrong; 'cause the song is so sweet it makes night like day and broken glass sparkle like a diamond on display. But once you've been cut and left alone with the pain, you know in your gut it was insane. And words that once sounded sweet are now dirt under your feet, as you walk by fast, free at last, clean of the past and its grime — 'cause it never was part of your natural mind!

Why Do We

why do we have to hate
we need to love
why do we have to fight
give yo' ninjas a hug
we always go out
'cause we scared
to let people down
with what we really about
but when you get...
[to be continued]

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When we feel pain, we can see and admit our mistakes, 'cause we feel it today! When we hide our fear with hateful words, tomorrow, too, is cursed. So we must get past the fear and lies to bring some love inside.

my heart is so sore
that i can't feel it anymore



Lil' Ray's Page

Everybody Wanna Thug

Now with my youngsters out on the corner
performin'
tryin' to be souljas,
just remember that I told ya.
Slow down.

I know you want to be a thug, and do what we do.
But if it ain't inside your blood,
then this ain't the game that you trying to play.
Just like one of my homies that tried to hang and
he died in a day.

Ahh shame, shame, shame,
bullet hit him in the brain
and he was my folks and that's real.

You get the picture?
Picture family in a single file line
all crying,

just because a loved one died
and nobody knows why.

It's so many dying 'cause too many trying to shine,
we all trying to swing from the same damn vine.

It's about that time for the homeboys to unite
and let the whole damn world know tonight.

If you a homie, get up and on this.

Everybody wanna be a thug, but they really don't,
'cause if they lived my life,
they would understand.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think that the thug life is so sought after? What is so appealing about thugging? If you could turn back the hands of time, would you never have started thugging? What kind of path do you wish you would have taken? And is the only road you plan to travel, or do you have plans to move on?

The Real

If you roll down my family tree with me, you'll see nothing but strugglers. I never knew any hustlers like my granny and my mama. So I gotta love my peeps, but I think way back in the day now, when moms and grams had my back they stayed down and gave me a place to lay down.

But then when the wind blew in, we got into some hard times and that's been keeping my people up off the hinges. So I'm out the door, gotta go make some on my own. Someone tell me what went wrong. Can't bring my family back because they long gone, and pops don't even come around, but I know pops got problems, that's why your little boy is still down with ya. But it hurts to see your family takin' a beatin'. My little relatives keep sayin' they hungry, gotta come up on some way to feed them. But my mom jumped up and took a ride downtown (callin' welfare).

When the check came, my mom did what she could. But me, I gotta get more and get money for us. So I continue to be a hustler, still strugglin'.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think you'll always have to go through struggle and strife? Can you find a way to make it an easier life? Can you get away from the things that lead you to incarceration? Are you willing to drop your old lifestyle for a new destination? Good luck with all that you undergo. Just remember, "you reap what you sow."

Hard Times

Up in the morning and I feel like I don't wanna be livin'
Better off dead without no bread, have you ever felt that feelin'?
Unsatisfied feeling like you wanna die 'cause when you reach
In your pocket you can't even find not even enough to go

purchase yourself something to eat
But forget that, I gotta come up in my life
'Cause it's the first of the month
and that's the perfect time to come up

The only problem is I'm broke and ain't got no dope
But as I was standing in my bathroom mirror

I looked at the soap

Hey soap looks a little like dope

I'm thinking to myself, I'm scandalous

But I chop me up some counterfeit amphetamines

But wait a minute, what if they wanna taste it . . .

I think quickly for cash

I dash to the kitchen and get the bread bag

Wrap that bread around some soap

Now I got the breadcrumb dope

It might sound funny, but it ain't no joke

'Cause doin' this here could get me smoked

But hey

So I stuff it 'cause I gotta get them ducats

Hit the medicine cabinet for the final touches

Oragel for the numbness

Then I hit the corner with a handful of breadcrumbs saying

"I got it for ya"

I had a pump on the porch if you say it ain't dope

It's 'cause yo' head is a little bit sober

I peep the creep on the come up and wait

for a fiend to roll up and walk to the car
with my hand on the pistol

He showed me the green

I said, "hold up" I gotta get my stash

And he need a twenty and I got that, faded

I'm loving these fake rocks glad I made 'em

I just hope this knock don't try to taste it

I drop him the twenty

He said it was lovely

But as he pulled off I think that he put the rock up in his mouth

So he gone come back for his money

I think that he peeped my scheme

He put it in reverse and he came back quick

Fiend jumped out and he talkin' all big

So I beat him and finished him off and he never came around
here no more

'cause he ran into yours

Truly poor but I scored

Lord forgive me but I can't remember
the last time I ate

Now I got to go get me a plate

Time to do this proper, only spent \$3.44

I'm full now I gotta save bread 'cause I still got \$6.56

I'm thinking hell yeah

These fake rocks got me off the hook

The knocks get booked, took, shook

I got dope, but it ain't dope

So I guess you can call me a crooked crook

Do you know somebody like me?

I don't think so 'cause it ain't nobody

I do what I gotta do, if I gotta, then I'm gonna cheat

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, Lil' Ray, your writing is so real, maybe that's what makes it so scary. Do you think that you'll always get down with the dope game to get bread? Do you see yourself finding any other way to get money? There's got to be another way! You just have to strive and work hard. If you reach for the sky, you're bound to catch a star — so reach for the sky — not the gutter. You have to learn new things. When you were a child, you had to learn to tie your shoe, you didn't just say, "I can't do it so I'm 'a wear Velcro's." Ya feel? You have potential seeping through each line that you write . . . but it's up to you to use it to the best of your ability.



Why Go To The Pen When You Can Send a Friend

Why go to the pen when you can send a friend? That's a saying in my area, because ninjas act hard and commit crimes, but when it comes to time they drop dimes, patter out the whole click just to get they case dismissed.

My advice is to watch who you hang wit'. Separate the real homies from the fake 'cause they will snitch and have you doin' time while they posted on the block, goin' to parties, or chillin' wit' the females. Just make sure your homies is real!

-Thinzel Washington

From The Beat: What keeps these snitches from dropping dimes on the wrong people? If they're snitching to get their cases dismissed, why wouldn't they just lie on people and tell the DA what he wants to hear?

Snitches

Well me, I hate snitches!

I've been snitched on several times. After I did my consequences I never seen those cats again, but when I do see them I ain't even gonna say what I'll do. One of them snitched on me and now that's the reason I am going to Camp.

I expected some of them to have my back and they snitched on me, and I didn't even snitch on them.

-Funk-E

From The Beat: It sounds like what you hate about snitching is the betrayal of trust from those who you thought you could trust. Would you have the same hate for someone who you didn't have a relationship with who snitched on you? For instance, would you have the same hate for an innocent bystander who saw you doing dirt and told the cops what you looked like? Is that "snitching"?

Be The Best Snitch You Can Be

If I could tell a speech of the streets?

Shhh, it ain't happenin'
My mouth get closed when
Walkin' through detectives'
front doors.

Many people get stiches
when lying on da unda
Snitchin' like they was tricken'

Money talks, drugs walk
with you in many ways
Snitches would do anything
to get up out they ditch
If you do the crime, main
Stand up and be a man
and do your time

"If you can't hang don't bang"

Many thoughts flow and
many thoughts stop

You only know what you
can do and what you about
Don't let no one put you down
'Cause of what type of "job" you do.

If you a snitch, be a good one
'cause when you get caught
many individuals are after
includin' myself
One love

-Young Crazy

From The Beat: Is your "No snitch" rule ironclad? Are there any exceptions to it? Since nobody ever owns up to being a snitch, how can we tell who's telling the truth and who's not? Everyone seems to know a snitch, but no one seems to be one. What's up with that?

"Telling"

Snitching

Snitching is a way of life. Not everyone does it, but they do it if they don't want to go to jail. So what do they do? Tell, that's just the way they do it.

If you was to get in trouble, between you and yo' friend going to jail, yo' friend will tell on you just so they don't gotta go. If you was a real ninja like some of the people I know, you will take the whole case. But a snitch ninja would never do that for you

I would rather be a real ninja then a snitch ninja ya dig...snitches get found in ditches.

-Young Bug

From The Beat: Would you say the difference between someone who snitches to save himself and someone who takes the blame even when he doesn't deserve it is honor? If all snitches found themselves in ditches, that would be the end of it. The problem is, lots of snitches do get themselves out of trouble, and that's why there will always be snitches.

Telling

Snitching, telling, it's all the same thing. Nobody likes a rat. I'd say the only person I'd snitch on is a 288 (child molester). If I saw a child getting molested I'd snitch or tell because child molesters die in the pen anyway.

I only know this because my PO put me in a SQUIRES program (San Quentin). It's like scared straight but not.

The prisoners in there told me that they kill child molesters, because the prisoners are very religious and into god. So if you molest a child of god you're going to die. So that's all. I'd snitch on.

-Big Mike

From The Beat: We find it interesting that prisoners would kill a child molester in order to carry out God's plan. We always doubt people who claim to know God's plan. (Does the Bible tell them to kill child molesters?) For example, how do you know God's plan doesn't include keeping you locked up? If child molesters are targeted by the general prison population, we don't think it has a thing to do with God! We also wonder what you would do if you saw a counselor beating up a youngster in the Hall, or a guard beating up a prisoner. Would you tell?

Truly

Snitching to me is snitching. It's a choice you make or don't make! Anything that has to do with snitching, I try to stay away from it! That part of bein' your own self, that's true I think, but that's my opinion!

And the entire thing, it's just a opinion, basically you have to do what you gotta do "truly." Amen!

-Jf

From The Beat: Would you ever tell? Do you think you'd tell if your life or someone else's life depended on it? When is it right to snitch?

The Way I Feel

The way I feel about snitching is you got the game all wrong. Me myself, I'm a boss about mines. I take care of mines and let others do what they do.

Like when I caught my case the police was tryin' ta ask all these questions like I was really about to snitch. So I refused to talk to them or say anything to them, and that's how I get down. There's no reason for all that telling / snitching.

-Blanca

From The Beat: Is there a difference between snitching when it applies to "the game" and telling if it's something outside "the game"? Why do you think that everyone

Debriefing

I think snitching is the lowest of all. Snitching to save themselves is a cowardly act; it's snitching regardless.

One thing I never understood was when my rivals snitch. Those fools are always snitching. Why they choose to gangbang and then they snitch when them and their homies get smashed? That's what they're good at.

Another thing is snitches run the pintas and CYA, along with every other institution. Some homies can't put in some work against some fools and not get snitched on.

Why would people want to snitch?

-Boxer

From The Beat: Why do you think people take the rap for others? Better yet, why do people put themselves in situations where they're liable to get snitched on? How can you make sure your not stepping into a "potentially high snitching" situation?

Damn Snitches

I got people snitching on me, and the way I feel about it is that I feel this anger for those people. I don't know why fools don't never keep they mouth shut. Fools get shot for snitching and that's a bad situation to be in. I'm finna do a lot of time in the pen' or CYA just because somebody said my name.

There's plenty of snitches up in here. That's why I say forget snitches, they don't deserve no trust or no respect. I ain't tripping, I'm 'a just do my time.

-Young R

From The Beat: We're sure folks will feel what you're saying, but for real, you're not just in the Hall right now because someone snitched. You're in here because you did something you shouldn't have. Ultimately the responsibility lies with you. At the same time, why do you think people snitch? Why do you think people take the rap for others? You can avoid all of this drama by keeping your boots clean. Ya know what we mean?

Snitches Get Stitches

In my book snitches get nothing but stitches 'cause they ain't nothing but a bia bia. They get some hard time so they go and drop the dime. They start pointing fingers and say who committed the crime. What a shame they get in the game, then when they get caught, they look for someone to blame and take responsibility for their actions.

They should have known that the police are always watching, but they spilled it all. Now they have to watch their back, 'cause snitches get stitches and they've fallen in their own trap.

-Jp

From The Beat: When is it okay to tell? Do you think that a rape victim who steps up and identifies the man who raped her is a snitch? Is that even considered snitching? Why or why not?

Telling

Personally, I hate snitches. There is no reason any way, shape, or form to snitch.

There may be some loopholes, as in "reasons to snitch." One of those reasons could be to tell on someone if they're a child molester. They are committing a horrible crime. They need to get what's comin' to them. That is a form of torture, and they some savage-ass fools for that.

My mom's a snitch. I violated my probation a few times, and she snitched to my PO. I then got locked up, but that's my moms — I still love her.

-Baby Sav

From The Beat: We're interested in your exception to the "never snitch" rule. For you, child molestation is grounds for snitching because "that is a form of torture." Is murder a form of torture? Is putting a gun to someone's head a form of torture? What if you knew of someone in the 'hood straight out torturing your enemy? Would that be a reason to snitch? And then, of course, while you think the worst crime is child molesting, others may think it's rape, or selling drugs. If you're the victim, every crime is the worst one...



"Telling"

More Time For No Snitching

The reason why I'm still in here and not on probation is because I didn't roll over on another person. I'm cool with doing a little more time than I should. It's about loyalty and brotherhood. That's why I didn't snitch.

Forget a snitch, they get what they deserve. The definition of a snitch is a person who shows weakness and breaks down under pressure. I was raised better than to be a snitch.

-James

From The Beat: Would you snitch on or hurt someone who hurt your family? Most likely yes. Some people let the law take care of it or take it into their own hands. The people who take it into their own hands are labeled criminals and those who take it to the police are considered doing the right thing. There doesn't seem to be a big difference between snitching and revenge overall. What do you think?

nowadays these
ninjas are getting
took out the game
just for opening
thier mouth for a
little bit of coins

Snitched On My Crimes

I hate snitches. The reason why I'm at Camp, is because someone snitched on me and my patnas for hitting house licks.

Everything was going good, too. Me and my patnas had money, DVD players, DVD's, paintball guns, silver chains, jewelry, Playstation 2's, X-Box, Game-cubes, and a whole lot of other valuables. Then one day, me and my patnas was walking down the street, and five-oh pulled up and arrested us.

While I was at the police station, I found out someone had snitched on me. And the cops found out about six other house licks that I did. And they also found out about me breaking into my school and taking hellra stuff.

While I was in the Hall, I found out who was snitching on me. I found out it was one of my own patnas, one that I was really close to. He snitched because the cops made him a deal, to let him go if he told everything.

I can never forgive him for what he's done. I could be out on the streets. But no, I'm at Camp Sweeney doing time for the crimes. And that's why I hate snitches.

-Peanut

From The Beat: You said that you were doing good, but you were doing bad. All that ill-gotten loot was just a set-up for what happened to you. You need to know it will always be something that messes up sooner or later! You need to step back and look at the big picture. You're doing time because you were doing crimes, period! All the rest is just petty details, different every time you get caught. It's like the old saying: "You can't see the forest for the trees." Open your eyes before you're in the penitentiary, still tripping over every little thing — but what really got you locked up: your crimes!

Dirty De's Rule #1: Never Tell

Telling to me is something that you just didn't do in the hood 'cause you could end up dead or hurt or found in the woods and that's the #1 rule in the game and my daddy always told me to follow it, man.

And nowadays these ninjas are getting took out the game just for opening their mouth for a little bit of coins and that's why I don't stay with hellra ninjas 'cause when the heat comes down, ninjas sho' do act like a snitch.

Man that's why I'm keeping my head up 'cause po-po's these days are doing anything to get you set up and if you don't tell them what they need to know, five out of ten percent you might just get wet up 'cause the ninjas nowadays will see you talking to the cops, swearing you snitching. That's why I sometimes be on the block anyway that's how I feel about telling. Just don't put yourself in that place and you might not get in trouble.

-Dirty-De

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing the lesson your father told you. What a life full of drama, paranoia and hate. Do you ever get tired of all this? Have you thought about not being out there on the streets and having a life that is peaceful, trusting and full of love? You can get your kicks and excitement doing other things that won't get you locked up.

Telling

I would define snitching as someone who feels unsafe or someone who wants a reward. Snitches usually get hurt because that's disrespecting the game. I don't mess with tellers 'cause if you do some dirt around them, they could tell 5-0.

-B2-Bo

From The Beat: Disrespecting the game? How is the game itself hellra disrespectful to life, loved ones and your community? We respect your opinion but next time explain it some more.

Do Not Snitch

In Oakland, telling (aka J-Cat Code) make you a sucka. Snitchin' ain't cool at all! You would get yo'self smoked quick behind snitching in the Oakland. We don't do that trash.

But also it depends on the case. Like if you involved in trash that got nothing to do with you — don't snitch; don't tell or say your part on behalf of the involvement you did. And don't put nobody else's name in place of yo' name!

Some ninjas snitching 'cause they got caught up and thei' potna didn't have nothing to do with it, but 'cause they in jail and thei' potna didn't get caught up, or didn't get as long as them and got out — they snitched on potna!

And some people snitch to get thei'self out of Dodge, and some because somebody else put thei' name in thei' mouth. Or some people just hate. I don't know!

But I once had a problem where a ninja said I was snitchin'! It ain't no problem no more, 'cause I don't care. He could say it all day. I ain't worried 'cause I keep it gangsta. And he pleaded guilty! So how did I snitch?

The lady-victim said he did it! So I didn't have to snitch. And he was guilty, and I didn't do nothing — I never said his name in any way whatsoever. If he think I snitched and he want to say something, go ahead on. But I got love for you, whenever, homie. Bye.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: That's an issue that comes up a lot, when one person thinks another snitched on him when it wasn't even like that. But how can you ever prove it? As you point out, there was no need for you to snitch; so why would you? On a deeper level, everyone acts like the problem is some "hater" or "snitch" — when the problem is you and what you do. Keep doing dirt and you're bound to get hurt, in or out of the system.

some people
snitch to get
thei'self out
of Dodge

Telling Is Weak

I think people who tell are hellra weak. There is no excuse to snitch.

Once a snitch always a snitch. Selfish people are worthless people who get no love from me or my family. I hate snitches that do the cops' jobs for them.

I'm in here 'cause my homeboy left my house in a stolen car and got in a high-speed chase. The detectives came to my door. I thought they where Jehova's Witnesses, so I opened the door. "LPD," they said. "Who left in the green Expedition?"

I told them, "I ain't gonna do your job for you." They recognized me from GTA. They threatened to charge me with a second one, but that stuff don't faze me. I wouldn't tell on my worst enemy. I put that on my white skin. Well, they kicked down my door for an arrest warrant. Couldn't find me for an hour-and-a-half, pulled me out my hiding place and brought me to the Hall.

-Always Ashley

From The Beat: Ashley, you really are a strong person and who is committed to her beliefs. Do you think it is selfish to tell on someone? Is "snitching" only telling the cops? Do you think it is okay to tell a parent, or someone who might be able to help out, about a certain situation? Define snitching. When is it just telling the truth, or keepin' it real?



Snitching

i don't like
snitches at all
'cause they throw all
the heat off of them
onto someone else
i don't get why
people do dirt
and then open their mouths
it just get people hurt

-Lil' Payaso

From The Beat: You need to see, that's the way it will be for all eternity — doing dirt and getting hurt. Find another way to make your pay, 'cause what really hurts you is the dirt that you do.

Don't Like It

i do not like
telling
because you
probably don't know
what
you would say
about something like
other people's business

-Nathan

From The Beat: Your poem is wisdom's witness: Find yourself and you won't get lost in other people's business.



Snitches

If you're a snitch, most likely you're a dead human walking. If you're a snitch, you're gonna get your family involved, too. Every snitch is gonna get murdered, it might take years, but it will catch up with you sooner or later!

If you're from my turf and you snitch — you're bound to get killed — that's how us Hayward soldiers get down! So snitch if you want to and get your life took.

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: If you look back into your past, was there ever a time you wish you did snitch? The consequences of snitching are terrible, but is telling itself always bad? Why or why not?

Telling

i do not like
telling
because you
probably don't know
what
you would say
about something like
other people's business

-Nathan

From The Beat: Your poem is wisdom's witness: Find yourself and you won't get lost in other people's business.

"Telling"

Telling

It depends on the situation. I would not tell because I would not want some one to tell on me. But if it was a person who killed a whole lot of people for not reason, if that person kidnapped some kid or woman, that is the only way I would tell. But everything else, I wouldn't.

And if I witnessed gangstas die, I would not snitch. I'm here because of a fight that he started and he end' up snitching and lying.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: This is a very thoughtful answer. In the future, we hope you can be this thoughtful in the words you speak and the actions you take. Remember revenge will hurt you too in the long run. THINK!

Make It Equal

It should be a law for telling, snitching, whatever you want to call it, but when you snitch on the person, you should do the same time they get.

I know if there's a hell, they (snitches) should go fo' sho.

-Joey

From The Beat: Are you sure that you mean all types of snitching? What if a rape victim steps up and presses charges against the man who rapes her? Should she get the same amount of time, too?

Snitchin'

Well, this is how I feel about snitchin'. I was brought up and told that a snitch is the worst thing to be and they don't live long.

From my experience, every 'hood I've been to got people that snitch 'cause a couple of people that used to be from my 'hood snitched on my homie, and my homie didn't even do it, but he took 17 years 'cause he didn't want to snitch on the other homie. So a snitch is not the thing to be.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Why do you think that people take the rap for others? Does a real friend let his friend go down for something that he didn't do?

Would You?

it's not wrong to tell
if you need to
but telling just to be telling
that some dirty trash
but if somebody's life is in trouble
i would say something
because if my life was at stake
i would want somebody
to tell me before it happens
because i am not ready to die
what would you do
if somebody told on you

-Jb

From The Beat: You put an interesting twist on the issue: What if the one to be killed is you? Who wouldn't want to be told before it came true? But then you ask us, "What if somebody told on you?" Well, if it led to a change of plans; after cooling off, you might even hear, "Thanks." Killing is an evil and foolish thing to do, so you might hear, "Thanks for stopping this foo!"

No Snitching At All

I don't agree on snitching in no kind of circumstance. There is no reason for anyone to be snitching, even if they are involved, they should've known. Snitching even though you're not involved is still not acceptable.

Basically, to hell with snitches. There should be no reason for anyone telling a story or snitching on any one for no reason, even if it affects you. You must of known what you were getting in to so pay for it. Don't be no punk ass snitch.

I just don't believe in that, to tell you the truth I hate that. The hell with a snitch, it just ain't right especially for those who snitch on co-partners or homies. That from my perspective, they knew what they were walking into, don't go out on the last minute, man up.

-Lil' José

From The Beat: You believe in this rule very deeply. Sounds like you've been snitched on. Could you see snitching as another form of revenge? Do you believe in revenge — making someone responsible for their actions by punishing them? If you continue to do dirty and never get snitched on or caught, do you think all of it will catch up with you eventually? Just something to think about.

Snitchin' Is A No-No

You are not supposed to snitch about nothing, 'cause if you say something, something is going to happen to you, and if you are in jail for a crime you didn't do, what you supposed to do is just keep your mouth shut, and just let the court find out who's guilty.

-Lil' Malo

From The Beat: Hmm . . . Is it ever okay to snitch? For example, a friend of yours is being abused by a family member and you knew someone who could help, would you tell? Is that snitching? Is snitching only snitching if it is to the police? Where is the line between trying to help someone and snitching?

Talkin' Too Much

Snitchin' ain't never been cool, snitchin' is why I'm in here. Somebody snitched on me — that's why I'm in here. It ain't right, it's ancient when somebody got to tell on someone else — it ain't right. Talking to da police and talkin' too much ain't cool.

You think when you snitchin' — it ain't gon' come back on you. Even though I thought my potna was solid, he wasn't. They tryin' to charge me wit' a lot of cases, but I ain't tellin'. Just 'cause somebody told on me — don't mean I'm gon' snitch too.

What goes up must come down. My part' in Rita tryin' to get a deal, but he already snitched on his self without knowing. I got caught, then he wanted to snitch on me. People just don't be solid as they used to. Brothers be breakin' down in da questioning room, snitchin' fa nothin' — just talkin' too much.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: You say, "somebody snitched on me — that's why I'm in here." Wake up! You are in here 'cause you were doing some stuff you weren't supposed to be doing. You have no control over what people say and you never will. Freedom of speech! So you just have to keep your tracks clean. What did you learn from this experience?

**Snitchin' ain't
never been cool,
snitchin' is why
I'm in here.
Somebody snitched
on me — that's why
I'm in here.**

Snitching Is Never Cool

I'm writing about snitching. First off, I want to say that snitching is never cool at any time.

If something happened and you were not involved, then maybe you can say that you did not do it. But if you know who did it, don't tell the other people — tell the person who you know did it, to tell the cops that you did not do it!

-Lil' Abu

From The Beat: It gets pretty ugly pretty quick, and you'll never know who said what, even if you think you know who "snitched." So learn how to control yourself and what you do, 'cause nothing on earth will ever give you that power over any other foo'!





Telling

Snitching to me is for punk, because if you a real ninja then you would obey the code of the streets, and that's "never snitch no matter what."

Even if you get shot don't snitch, just handle yo' business by yo'self. Don't get the police involved. If you see one of yo' ninja get killed, don't snitch, just handle yo' business.

All I got to say is I ain't a snitch and I ain't gon' never be a snitch because snitches get stitches.

RIP Lee, Reem, Fred-Fred, Joe Cheez. One love.

-Young Duke-El B1

From The Beat: Why do you think people snitch? When you were little, did you ever tattle on your little brother or sister (or big brother or sister)? Is that the same thing as snitching? Has anyone ever snitched on you?

Telling

I don't like to be snitched on because it's just not a coo' thang to do at all.

I got told on. I ain't gon say too much because I'm in here stressin' like hell waitin' for court so that certain person can come and try and spy me out.

That's why I only "stunt 101" with real ninjas 'cause peoples' life ain't real at all. But I'm gon 'cause this stuff short.

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: What do you mean that peoples' lives ain't real at all? Your life seems pretty real to us. You may not like where you are or how you got here, but that's all real. What are we missing?

"Telling"

Snitches Is Suckas

I feel snitches are wrong. Telling and snitching is two different things. Telling is something you do to help you and others. Snitching is telling just to do because you a sucka.

-Jamal B2

From The Beat: Ah, okay. So a snitch is just someone who wants to harm others for no reason?

It's Not Okay

I don't think snitching is ok 'cause people snitching done messed up my life. I got snitched on for a robbery I had did at a park when the other kid I did it with got caught. I was almost finished wit' my group home, but that screwed up all my shhhh and I got scared I was gonna have to come back to Juvi so I ran. I violated like six times just for runnin' away 'cause I got stay away orders from neighborhoods in da city, and like six people, and I was with just about all of them when I got arrested.

I'm not as close wit' a lot of my family members now, too, just 'cause people wanna snitch. I also got kicked outta school and now I can't even get out 'cause they scared to send me to a group home 'cause I left and was on da run for so long. Now I gotta go to Jorge Jr. all cause people wanna snitch. I woulda been off probation and at home by now.

-Tyree B2

From The Beat: We understand why you're mad at this person for snitching, but if you're really honest with yourself, do you think you're also to blame? If you hadn't committed the robbery in the first place, he wouldn't have had anything to snitch about, and you wouldn't have had to run and . . . The good part about taking responsibility is that you don't have to worry about what other folks do, you only have to worry about what you do.

What I Think 'Bout Snitchin'

Da worst thing dat happened to me was bein' snitched on. I don't see why people can act like they sick one day, then end up bein' state evidence. What part of the game is dat?

I think if you get snitched on then retaliation is a must. People nowadays wear snitch jackets as a pass to get they incarcerated time taken away.

But when you snitch it's gon catch up to you eventually one way or another. If you don't believe, snitch and watch what happens. Someone gonna creep and catch you whether it's now or later, but it will catch up.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: What we can't understand is that everybody writes that they hate snitches and will take their revenge, but there are always a lot of snitches around. So, if nobody is snitching, who are the snitches? You know what Martin Luther King said about retaliation? He said an eye for an eye will soon lead to a blind society. Sounds like what we got now...

Can't Be Trusted

For me, snitching can get you killed, because nobody can trust you because they know your gonna snitch.

But sometimes it's right to snitch, especially if we're talking about my family and myself.

-Jomar B2

From The Beat: We're confused about when snitching is ok. Do you mean if someone does something to you or your family?

Talking

You get yourself into something that's on you, that is not on no one else but you. So when it's someone in your face asking about whatever it is to talk about, if you want to talk about yourself that's on you. Long as that's what you want to do, meaning talking about what you did.

When it's someone else involved, if he not locked down or was not seen or known, that's how it should stay. You must look at it like this: In order to talk you must know something. To know something you had to be trusted at one point. So why get into something that you cannot handle in the first place.

It ain't no time when telling is coo', no matter what.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: Even though we think your analysis of trust is a good one, we wonder about your conclusion that telling is never a cool thing to do. We wonder if you would feel the same if someone did something bad to your little sister or brother. If you knew where Osama bin Laden was hiding, would you tell?

Good And Bad

Snitching is good and bad because it could be helpful. Sometimes it's necessary; sometimes it is not. Because if you're in a case where you're facing 20 years for somebody else, you should save yourself.

What brings me down is confusion, hate, lies, cheating.

-Markea GU

From the Beat: Interesting take on telling. Two kinds of telling we've thought about are snitching: When you are in trouble and you tell on someone just to wash you hands clean. Then there's helping a friend by telling on them. For example, if you know your friend is being abused by her boyfriend, you should let someone know so the abuse will stop. That is not snitching, in that case, you are being a friend.

Fear And Snitches

I'm in here because people (I'm not going to say no names) snitch on me. They got caught and they was scared. But I ain't trippin' 'cause what goes around comes around.

But when they trying to steal young Threadz' shine? It's nothin'. I'm like what it is? Stay down.

-Threadz B4

From The Beat: If people snitch out of fear (and not out of greed), is that forgivable? What do you think the biggest motive to snitch is?

Why Snitch?

Me personally, I hate snitches with a passion. Snitches don't make it far in life unless they in protective custody or something. People dat snitch is labeled a hater which have to look over his/her shoulder throughout they life for da people they snitched on.

In dat case they'll have a permanent snitch coat which is worn by a lot of playa haters dat can't stand da pressure in da situation they're in. So if you are a snitch and you're reading my piece, get off dat sucka train, boy, and get yo' mind right.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: The problem we have with the snitch pieces we get — which, like yours, universally condemn snitches as low-life scum — is this: If everyone hates snitches so much, then who is doing the snitching? We had a friend who took a murder rap for his brother and was executed for refusing to snitch. Would you go that far?

Their's Scared

A snitch ain't go' make it nowhere but six feet deep. People that snitch be the people that's scared to do time.

Ninjas come to YGC and do a lot of snitching for some punk-ass room time. I would not even want to see what a ninja would do on the street. I feel if you do the crime, you should be prepared to do the time.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: If you play the game, you should know you might get told on, too. The only way to protect yourself from snitches is to do right and not wrong.

Loose Lips Sink Ships

Someone once told me "loose lips sink ships," feel me. If you're a snitch, you know what that means. This piece is dedicated to all the lying snitches.

God don't like ugly. Stop dropping dimes and nickels. Save ya money because you might become a millionaire one day. To all you other liars, I ain't never left. I know everything you tell yo' females and these other messy dudes, so stop perping and be real wit' yourself 'cause life isn't a movie.

Stay positive. Rise above all the madness.

-Afro B4

From The Beat: That's good advice you're giving. Why do you think there are so many snitches, especially when everyone who writes always says how much they hate snitches. If everyone hates snitches, where do these snitches come from? What advice can you give about how to rise above the madness?

Snitching In YTEC Is Supporting

At YTEC, it's not called snitching. It's called "supporting" or "helping." I can't stand it when people be snitchin' or be addin' their two cents. They should just mind their business. What the counselors don't know won't affect them.

-BarsFrama, YTEC

From The Beat: It's sounds like you are having a hard time there, at YTEC. Don't forget that program is there to help you, and it has rules all have to follow. Just do your part, and let others say what ever they want.

When it's someone else involved, if he not locked down or was not seen or known, that's how it should stay.



What Kind Of Man Would I Be

I feel that snitches deserve stitches and that's real. 'Cause snitching, it will all come back on you. I mean what kind of man would I be if I, myself, a ninja that do wrong, would tell on the next man. That would be crazy. I know about that before I jump in it. Man, so don't be in the game if you got a weak heart. From you boy, stay true my ninjas, one love.

-Rob B2

From The Beat: We're sure a lot of Beat readers will feel you on this. Could you imagine helping the next man if he were accused of something you had actually done? Would you bust yourself out? What do you think your ninjas would do if they were in that position?

Telling

When I first came to America I was doing very good at middle school and was a good kid. But after middle school I went to high school. When I got to high school, I changed a lot of stuff. For example, first I don't go to school, chilled with the wrong people, and do something against law.

If I could change something I would change all the bad things to good things, because I didn't want to get caught and do the time stuff.

-Mei B2

From The Beat: Why do you think you changed once you went to high school? Obviously you can't go back, but you can change what you're doing now? Are you willing to find different friends and start going to school?

"Telling"

Can't Be Trusted

If you snitch you can't be trusted. Ain't no one gonna pull licks wit' you, or handle business wit' you 'cause if you get caught up by yourself and you snitch, you got your own boys puttin' a hit on you or you just known to be a snitch and you gonna get disrespected a lot.

-A-Pon B2

From The Beat: We hear what you're saying, but maybe having no one want to "pull a lick" with you would actually be a good thing, then the temptation to pull one would be lower. Get what we mean? With friends that encourage you to get into trouble, why do you need enemies?

If I could change something I would change all the bad things to good things

A Blow To The Head

One of the worst things that happened to me in my life is when I was in the third grade.

It was raining so I fell off these metal handrails when I was playing tag. I fell head first to the ground and had a big knot on my head, and I had to get seven stitches in my forehead after I sat up in the hospital for three hours straight.

The way I dealt with it was by going to the hospital.

-Anthony B1

From The Beat: Ouch! We bet that hurt! Have you ever broken any bones, or was that your only experience in the hospital?

It's All For A Reason

The worst experience that I gone through? Let's see. I can't really be like, "Oh, this was the worst experience in my life," because in my point of view, all good or bad experiences happen for a reason.

Yea, some are worse than others, but the one that sticks out in my mind is coming to YGC. Really, it wouldn't have been a bad experience if I came in for a violation or something, but my first time and I got to trip off of CYA.

So, this is not a good experience. It's one of my bad ones.

-Cobs B5

From The Beat: Of course, this is not designed to be a good experience, but it still should have some positive things to offer. Does it? We appreciate your view that all experience teaches, so it all happens for a reason. What has this experience taught you? From this experience, what would you want to teach others?

Keep Your Head Up

(Dedicated to P-Gee-Zee)

Every experience, be it bad or good, teaches us a lesson or at least it should.

Mr. Right turned out to be Mr. Wrong. Learn from your mistakes. Keep faith.

Press forward big bra.

Move on.

Dry your tears.

Wipe your eyes.

Find the strength.

Look inside.

Love yourself.

Take care of yourself.

If need arises, Big Bra, please yourself. Do a check up from neck up. Say a prayer, Big Bra. Hold your head up 'cause one day you'll have all the joy your heart can hold, and then you'll be glad you pressed forward and so thankful you moved on, Big Bro.

-Rockstar B4

From The Beat: We love the list of recommendations. We also like the hope you hold out to "Big Bro" that one day his heart will be filled with joy. That is a goal worth living for.

Mind Your Own Business

Well, I don't want to talk or write about something that happened to me because it hurts a lot remembering what I been through.

I been through a lot of hard stuff in my life. It's just like you can't write about it, it's hard.

Well, that's all for today.

-Veronica GU

From The Beat: Sometimes it's hard to bring up painful things, we want to avoid them because it brings painful memories up, but we recommend you talk or write about it on your own or to someone you trust, because it's not good to keep those kinds of things in, somehow, someday, they will come out in a negative way if you don't deal with them in a healthy way right now.

One Of The Worst Thing

I'm gonna let everybody know one of the worst things that ever happened to me. My friend and me were kicking it, and about ten guys came out of nowhere and put a gun to my head with a purpose of robbing me, but the bad thing was that they were rival gang members from my gang, but they didn't know I knew. I recognized the colors they were flashing.

Anyways, they started going through my pockets. But what they didn't know is that I had a belt that represented the color I claim. So I was afraid that by accident one of them would lift up my shirt and see it, and then pull the trigger. But thank God nobody did and all they took was my possessions and not my life.

-Diablyto B4

From The Beat: You were lucky, very lucky. What do you think it says about who we are and what kind of communities we allow to thrive when a person could get killed for the belt he's wearing? We assume that if the tables had been turned, you would have wanted to do them harm for the colors they wore, right? Do you still feel the same way now? What does it say about you, about your homies, about all of us, that we organize ourselves into groups (gangs), and then we define those gangs by the violence we can impose on our rivals? Is there any way around this way of thinking?

"Write A Speech"

Freedom

The worst thing that ever happened to me was when I lost my freedom.

-Weasel

From The Beat: Don't you think you've learned all that Juvy has to offer? What are your plans for your freedom?

This Is The Worst

My worst experience is what I'm going through right now. I have never been under so much pressure. But when it all fall into place, it don't make me mad.

It's just time and I don't want it to be wasted on no street corner. Getting jacked by undercover cops while they check my bucket, praying to God that they find something but come up with nothing.

They can just take it, but it's nothing to a hog from the gutta. If the DA play me, I'm going to thug it out all the way through, you feel me. I feel no pain.

-Hollister B4

From The Beat: If you don't want to waist the time you've got on the street corner, how do you want to spend your time? What do you want out of life, and how do you think you will achieve it? If this is "nothing to a hog," when does it become something? Would a commitment to YA be something? How 'bout state prison? If you "thug it out all the way through," does that mean you don't see a reason to change anything about your life?

Never Come Back

The worst thing I experienced in my life is been locked up in YGC for the first time in my life, an' not to be able to go to the movies, or to go out with my friends, or to spend time with my family members.

I hate not being able to go outside when I want to, or not been able to go to school. I wish I can go home soon an' never come back here in my whole life.

-Johnny B1

From The Beat: We hope you get your wish that you never come back here. But what can you do to make sure you get this wish? If you know what brought you here, then you also know what will keep you out. Are you willing to make the changes necessary?

Missing Home

The worst thing that happened to me was that I had to come to YGC. That was the worst thing that happened.

Another thing that happened to me was my favorite cousin got killed. RIP, Joe Cheez. That the only thing.

Where I come from you can't snitch. I learned that if you don't snitch on somebody, nobody will snitch on you.

What bring me down is not being home with my people.

-Fat Boy B1

From The Beat: You don't have to write on all three topics, just one. But anyways, we're really sorry about your cousin. How did you learn the lesson about snitches? We hope you didn't have to learn that lesson the hard way.



Without My Grandma

Juvenile Hall brings me down 'cause I don't want to be here because I want to be home to take care of my grandma.

-Alvin B2

From The Beat: Your grandma must be a wonderful person, because you always speak about missing her when you're in the Hall. So what can you do to stay out of the system?

When My Friend Died

What brings me down is when one of my friends dies because it hurts me that I could have stopped from happening, or prevented it.

I feel bad 'cause of it and sometimes I take it out on myself, so that's what brings me down in this world.

-Michael YTEC

From The Beat: We feel you about you not being able to do a thing about it. Remember, no one can do anything about death because it's not in our power. Now, you have other friends and yourself left in this world. Can you help them now that you have time?

It Brings Me Down

What brings me down is when one of my family members or one of the homies gets killed. It's hard to go through stuff like that, but making it through stuff like that makes you a real man.

Another thing that brings me down is when I'm locked-up and don't know when I'm going to get out.

-Mar-G's YTEC

From The Beat: That's real talk homeboy. It's not the struggle that makes the man; it's how hard he fights that does. It seems like you've already been through a lot and this time that you're serving should be nothing compared to loss you've had to live with. Also, when you do find out when you're going to get out, make sure you can visit your dead loved ones, all right?

**making it through stuff like
that makes you a real man**

Not Seeing My Family Brings Me Down

The thing that brings me down the most is not being able to see my family. Every day I go to sleep, I just sit and think about my family. It brings me down knowing that I'm gone to sleep not being able to see them and I'm waking up not seeing them.

What else brings me down? Not being able to go and come as I please. Not being able to make my own decisions, not being able to move without asking permission. That type of shhh brings me down.

-Dutch B5

From The Beat: This would definitely get to us, too. Family is where we can be ourselves and know we're loved, even when there's drama. But, of course, the very definition of jail is separation from those we love. There's not much you can do about being in the Hall now, but when you get out there's a lot you can do to avoid coming back. Feel us?

Haters Bring Me Down

What's up Beat? All I got to say is what brings me down is when my ninjas be hatin' on me when I be getting my shine on.

Everywhere I go, I be seein' the hate in their eyes. The reason why is because I be ballin', pushin' them big bodies, and most of all I'm a lil' young pretty boy.

I got it, made it everywhere I go. I even got it made in the system. I don't how, but that's just the way it is. I don't care if they be hatin' 'cause they are not hurtin' me, they hurting themselves. They want to be like me, but can't 'cause they ain't got it like how I got it.

-Jay Baby B4

From The Beat: Can you explain to us how you got it made in the system? It's good that what they do doesn't bother you. Do what you have to do and remember not to push it too hard.

What Brings Me Down On The Outs

What brings me down is when I'm out on the outs doing me — that means out there, being me, getting my shine on.

It's always one of the cops to be the ones to hate. Like every day it's the same ol' same ol'.

They want us to work mo', but I refuse to work for the white man, I rather keep on working it. My pops got his own business and plus the money come quick and faster.

I stay putting my ninjas on 'cause they do the same for me. It's nothing. We all we got. Me in young stuff we stick together like bread and butter off top. All you haters stay down.

-Lil' Stunt B4

From The Beat: Will you be able to depend on your pop's business for the rest of your life, or will you have to do something on your own? Do you see a good future by heading the way you're going? Where do you see yourself in five years?

When I Feel Sorry

The thing that brings me down is when I feel sorry for myself. When I think about stuff I have done in my past it brings me down. I start to feel bad knowing I messed up my past and hopefully not my present.

-Nicole GU

From The Beat: It's hard to have a past you feel bad about, but if you learn from those past mistakes, you can make better decisions now.

Gets Me Down

The thing that brings me down is when I mess up and my family gets very disappointed in me. I feel so stupid and ashamed, but over time, they forgive me and I just learn from my mistakes.

-BarsFrama YTEC

From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you are learning from your mistakes. We recommend you not to make more mistakes so you have a clean conscience and won't have to worry about your family getting disappointed at you.

The Things That Bring Me Down

The things that bring me down is when I come to YGC. YGC mess up a ninja's hustle. When you come in here you have some money stacked at home and you come home and it's gone. Mom spent it on the rent.

The other thing that bring me down is a female and a hater, because a female want a lot of time out of a day and I think time is money.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: So why bother with females at all. You can just stay on the block and cuddle up with your chedda'.

It's Not Good Here

YGC brings me down because it is not good to be at YGC, because I could be in school and working at a gym playing basketball.

-Jose B2

From The Beat: You could be doing a lot more than sitting in the Hall alright. So how will you keep this in mind the next time you're faced with temptation?

Being Here Bring Me Down

Being in here gets me down because I don't get to see my family. I miss my mom and dad a lot. I wish I could get another chance. I hate being in here, but I try to keep my head up. That's all I got this week.

-Young Sheik B5

From The Beat: Well, there isn't much here, but we can feel you anyway. If you got that other chance you're wishing for, what would you do differently to make sure you didn't end up with the same result as now?

Feeling Sad

What brings me down is when I'm feeling sad and there is nobody to support me, feel me. It's like if I don't have no family or friends to back me up, feel me.

What brings me down is when I try my best to do something, and people tell me I'm bad.

-Pastrulo B1

From The Beat: What makes you feel sad in the first place? What do you do when you're feeling sad? As to those people who tell you that you're bad, or that you can't do what you set your mind to do, your best revenge is to prove them wrong. Keep trying your best, and the best will come to you.

**The thing
that brings
me down
the most is
not being
able to see
my family.**



"What Brings You Down"

Breaking Promises

What brings me down is when I decided the last time I was in custody I told myself I wasn't gonna put myself in this predicament, but once again, I'm back in here wishing I was on the outs doing something productive with my life other than being wrapped up. I'm doing cool waiting for disposition.

The other thing that brings me down is the DA's and PO's always recommending something that won't do no good, but they don't care, as long as they benefiting from it.

Anyways, I know it seems like it gets worse before it get better, and I wanna tell my following loved ones in max-unit stay solid, Lil' Shawn, Dirty-D, Joe, and Money-Man.

-BT

From The Beat: BT, it does seem like it gets worse before it gets better. Why did you break that promise to yourself, and do you think you can keep it this time? When you make mistakes in life, the way to turn it into a positive situation is to learn from it. What are you learning?

Bringin' Me Down . . .

A lot of things bring me down, like I am always away from my family. I got charges for a robbery I did not do. And I am in jail.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Can you find a spiritual reason for a higher power putting you in Juvenile Hall for something you didn't do? And, is there something you can do in the future to keep something like this from happening again — different friends, different place to hang out?

Cry Myself To Sleep

what brings me down
is being in here
in the hall
looking at these four walls
wondering how
i put myself in this situation
in here listening to people
telling me what to do
brings in more complication
they act like they care
but they really don't
'cause they don't know
the time i'm facing
as i lay down at night
i'm crying myself to sleep
'cause i'm so angry
and i get so weak
i wake up in the morning
filled with pain
sometimes i just can't explain

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: To be a teen, facing years away from your scene, has got to make the pain feel keen and sharp as a knife! What can you do but survive, accept your situation as a fact of life, and strive to see what got you in this plight. Then work on your heart and soul, to make sure you'll never again be in a place so cold. When you feel that change within — a better future will begin.

Not At Home

What brings me down is when I have to go to sleep at night and I am not at home.

Being in Juvenile Hall is very hard to deal with and very stressful. Being in Juvenile Hall can cause you to go into depression.

-Hard To Deal

From The Beat: Juvenile Hall is a tough place to be. It may not be the best place for rehabilitation, but it is temporary. Hopefully, you learned something from this experience and we'll never see you in here again.

Brings Me Down

what brings me down
is when i hear bad things
what brings me down
is when things don't go my way
what brings me down
is when i get into a fight
what brings me down
is when someone dies
what brings me down
is when i am in juvenile hall
what brings me down
is when i am not with my family
what brings me down
is when i am sad
what brings me down
is when i can't do something right
what brings me down
is when tishay gets into a fight
what brings me down
is when tyresha falls off a bed

-Mark

From The Beat: We saw Tishay and Tyresha smile at the end of the reading of your poem. Locked down in the same unit, everyone's actions have an effect on everyone else; no matter what people say. Yet if each can support the next, it makes things better, if not best.

makes me want to dive in the ocean.

From The Beat: The name of the game is hate, and a stunting life style is just bait. You're hating on that knock when you sell him the poisonous rock his addiction tells him he's got to smoke, or any other kind of dope! And when a player says, "I want you to have my baby;" don't turn around and blame it all on the lady. We're not hating, you feel; we're just saying what's real. Your world will be a better place, if you quit your scandalous ways.

What Brings Me Down

What brings me down is when I came back here for no reason. I was in a group home, I was there for a few months in Stockton. I didn't know I was coming back, they just told me I had a warrant. When I got here to the hall, they told me I had a 1-8-7 and that brought me down. I know what they were talking about but I did not do it. What flashed in my head when I thought about 1-8-7 was that I would never see the outs again. They are trying to charge me as an adult. I'm fifteen years old.

I've been coming in and out of here for over a year. The first time here I was charged with attempted murder, which I beat. The second time was for the same case, which I beat. And now I got this case, and someone is snitching on me, saying I pulled the trigger.

It feels like I have no hope. I feel like I'm not gonna make it back in time to see my family. I'm stressing off this, this is my life. I just hope I get out and I beat this case. If that happens I'll change my whole life, slowing down on banging but I'll still represent. Can I do that? I don't know. I have a lot to think about.

I wouldn't want nobody to be in my place, in this place you have to watch your back every second. I don't want it to get any worse. I'd rather be charged as a juvenile then an adult 'cause I'm not ready for prison. That's all I got to say. See you next week. To all the homies doing 25-L, life sentences, be strong.

-Stressing

From The Beat: Even though you aren't responsible for this, it still sounds like you were doing too much. There is a chance you will beat this case and you get treated like the kid you are. But there is that stuck mentality you have. We've met many who still have love for their gangs and homies but do not put it in work anymore. Some get jobs, go back to school, help their families or community in some way, and they stay free. Even after going through that previous case you mentioned, you still didn't learn. Why do you mess with your life and freedom like this? When will you realize that you may one day face life or many decades locked up if you don't stop putting in work? You have much to think about.

A Lot Brings Me Down

A lot of things bring me down, like my negative behavior because if I wasn't to do what I did, I could be on the outs with my girlfriend.

-Lil' Dee

From The Beat: There's always tomorrow. What can you do in the future to make sure that you aren't separated from your love again?

Losing My Freedom

One of the things that brings me down is losing my freedom! It's hard to imagine another man telling you what to do ever yday, but that's reality for me right now.

I been in here five days, and these days feel like weeks, literally! I try not to think about it, but every time I wake up and look at the room and these damn clothes — it all hits me!

I'm here, and it's nothing I can do about it — but take it!

-Shawn

From The Beat: Being in here is something you must deal with for now; even when you get to feeling down. But you can turn it all around, by doing better when you're out — giving no one a reason to send you back to lockdown. Stay free, perpetually!

Jealousy Going Around

What brings me down is haters, how they be so jealous of yo' style, jealous of how we stunt in those scrapers and how we always in traffic with da police.

Haters just need to give up, because they is not going nowhere with all that hatred. That really brings me down, from the heart, straight up.

What also brings me down is females and how they say they be pregnant with yo' baby, knowing they don't know who's baby it is! Dat brings me to hell. I can't stand fake people talking all at the mouth.

I wish the world was a great place, but my wish will never come true. All of this jealousy going around, just

-Lee

Sonja

the one thing that
really brings me down
is when i lose a girl
that i really cared for
like this one girl
named sonja
she came into my life
a while ago
and stole my heart
and when i lost her
i felt like my life
would end
'cause i loved her
i still do
and now that
i'm back with her
my life is a lot better
i love you girl

-Rich

From The Beat: If you want to make her life better, then it's time to stop chasing that cheddar on the spot, and give school and a job your best shot — unless you want to lose all you've got.

Don't Bring Me Down

some things that
bring me down
are weed
and e's
you people
know what i'm talkin' about
and when i get caught
for what i did
it brings me down
and when i don't
have no money
it brings me down

-John

From The Beat: When you're ready to get off the roller-coaster ride, you'll put those E's aside and stop chasing that momentary high. If you don't ever you-know-what, you won't get caught up.



Hard Times

From one to four
I do not remember
All I can see
Is like a blender

From four to six
Is very slender
To much crying
And lots of anger

From six to ten
Lots of pain
Lots of death
And lots of rain

From ten to twelve
A lot of changes
A lot of places
To a lot of ranges

From twelve to fifteen

A lot of new people
Back to old places
And new to the steeple

Fifteen and on
I do not know yet
But I'll be there soon
So I better get set.

-Quorry

From The Beat: Nice rhyme Quorry. What do you mean by getting set? What kind of future do you envision for yourself? At what point will you take control of the direction your life is headed in? The course your life will take begins in your mind and then becomes reality through your repeated actions in your everyday life.

I'm My Mom's Baby

Dear God up above I thank Thee,
every day that You wake me,
blessin' me with that beautiful, sweet-hearted Mother you gave me,
And I know that she's here
but she's not always gonna be with me
right there to save me,
Which is why I gotta make the right choices
so I won't let the game play me,
and I know at times that I act real crazy,
actin' like nothin' could fade me,
But I gotta change the ways that I'm thinkin',
'cause at any time God can take me,
and I wouldn't want something like that to happen anytime soon,
at least not that way, G.
Because I know that it'll really break my mom,
It's the simple fact that ...
I'm my mom's baby...

-Anthony

From The Beat: You are truly blessed to have a mother who loves you Anthony. You are luckier than a lot of kids we know. It probably breaks her heart to see you locked up. What could you do to make her proud? What could you do to make yourself proud? A journey of a thousand miles starts with only a few steps. Are you ready to take a step?

Questions

Is there a heaven
And is there a hell?
Will I succeed
And or will I fail?

Will I live
To play another game
Or will I slumber
And fill with shame?

Will I live free
Without these chains
Or will I be apathetic
And stay the same?

Will I do drugs
Or will I take charge
Or will I be successful
Without any bars?

-Quorry

From The Beat: Quorry, it sound like you have some doubts about your ability to make the right decisions. You don't seem to trust yourself to do the right thing all the time. Who can you surround yourself with who will help you stay on the straight and narrow? The type of friends you have can make or break you. Do you have the kind of friends who will lift you up or the kind who will hold you down?

Feelings

I once was happy
And I once was sad
I once was scared
I once was mad

Now that I'm older
I'll always look back
At when I was younger
And when my heart turned black

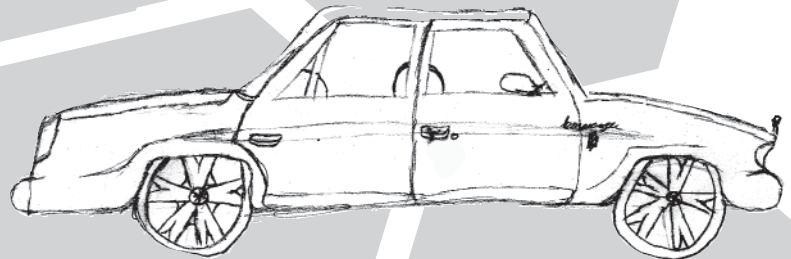
Didn't listen to nobody
Wanted to stay mad
Didn't care about anybody
Or what made them sad

But when I reminisce
About the past
At how people felt
At when I sassed

It makes me feel ashamed
At what I did
When people tried to help
And what I said

-Quorry

From The Beat: Quorry, recognizing the impact our actions have on others can be sobering and sometimes even fill us with regret. You are choosing to be real about your feelings. For this we applaud you. Now our challenge to you is to make amends to those you have wronged where possible and forgive yourself.



Santa Cruz

My Safeway Experience

I would like to tell you about my experience in Juvenile Hall with a Safeway Select root beer can. It all started when I yelled out Bingo and collected my prize. And that's when I split some fool's wig with the root beer can.

To me it was worth it. I caught assault on an inmate with bodily harm. I was sentenced to the Ranch. Returned two months later and was re-sentenced to another program. Anyway, that's my little story about Safeway Select root beer soda.

For the record, I don't like root beer soda. I think that's why I used it on that kid.

-V

From The Beat: That's an interesting story. It might be a good idea to refuse root beer, when offered. And, how do you feel about the situation now? Are you proud of what you did or are you ashamed? Why?

My Favorite Soda.

My favorite soda is Sprite and Coke. I can't really describe how good it tastes. It makes my day. I would rather drink soda than beer.

Don't get me wrong. I like a cool one, but only when I'm partying, or with some hinas. But soda tastes real good when just chillin'.

-J

From The Beat: Have you ever seen what a can of soda will do to a nail, in just a few days? Maybe the air force should drop soda cans instead of bombs. Soda is almost as powerful. Yeah, but it does taste good.

Fits

Well, my house isn't that great, but I wear jerseys that cost at least a hundred bucks. And I just got a 59 Cadillac. I want to put some silver Daytons on it and as soon as I get a job, I will.

I think if you don't live in luxury, you might as well dress and drive as if you did. That's just what I think.

-Rex

From The Beat: That's a pretty costly front. Consider this: take just ten percent of what you spend on fits and your car and spend it in a bookstore. For the price of one jersey you could buy at least ten books.

My Experience In Atlanta

I'm writing about when I went to Atlanta, Georgia. It was my first time out of the state and I went by myself. It was me and my brother on the plane. It was also the first time I was on a plane. It was a very good experience for both of us and I loved every moment of it.

When we finally got there, we just went downtown to the good part of Atlanta. Then we saw the gold teeth shop, so we went in and got some gold teeth. Then we went down the street and I saw clothes like I've never seen before. I bought some. Spent almost seven hundred dollars just trying to have a good time.

Then we met friends out there. They were rappers. So we went to their studio and we all just had a good time. We were rapping and chillin' with new friends and seeing and doing things, for the first time.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Sounds like the trip of your young lifetime. What caused you to choose Atlanta? Why not Chicago or Detroit or Union Springs? Do you recommend that others go there too? Was there any culture shock when you went out there?

If

If I were to die today
would I be reborn tomorrow?
If I were to leave you to wait
would your heart be filled with sorrow?

If my body decayed in the earth
would my soul be there for birth?
Or would I dissipate in silence,
only to feel sadness?

Every day I ask myself why.
But my head always lies.

Living endless days that count the years,
my heart and soul drown in endless fears.

-Jesse

From The Beat: A philosophical poem, Jesse. If you ever figure out the answers to those questions, you could make a mint.

**If my body
decayed in
the earth
would my
soul be
there for
birth?**



I'm Sorry, Momma

i know i've put you through
a lot of stuff and i'm sorry
you told me all you wanted me to do
was to "go to school
and make something good
out of yourself"
all i can say is i'm sorry
and i know what i have to do
to show you that i'm sorry
momma forgive me
for what i did wrong
through the past
i love you with all my heart
and i'm sorry, momma

-Laron

From The Beat: Saying you're sorry is a start, and we know it comes from your heart. But to show her your remorse for the past, you'll have to make changes — and make them last!

Touched

i've been touched
i've been hiding
my feelings too much
it's time to let them show
i just gotta let you know
i've been touched by you
i don't know if you got a clue
remember when it was the summertime
and i first met you
but now you left me sad it's true
and boo to you i'm dust
but by you to me i been touched

-Tyresha

From The Beat: A summer love you'll never forget? Then cherish the memory, no matter what does or doesn't come next.

About Beyonce

No doubt about it, the B in Beyonce is for bootylicious. Now an established solo act even, though Miss B is an entertainment entity onto herself the singer/actress is still the lead singer of the equally as popular girl-group, Destiny's Child. The group soon scheduled to throw down another album. Perhaps currently the most well-known face and body in the music industry, Beyonce possesses a bodacious bod', we get night sweats just thinking about.

Beyonce Knowles has sashayed her way into music history and across the windmill of our minds as we conjure up constant replays of all her videos featuring her own trademark brand of extraordinary rump shaking mayhem! We think we'll stop her before we embarrass ourselves any further.

-Beyonce Fan

From The Beat: She is gorgeous. But remember young men that there is more to a woman than her body. Bodies get old and wrinkled. Plus when the woman can see you only want her for her body, she brushes you off and you end up all alone when you're old and wrinkled. It's fun to have a crush on a star though. Great commentary.

Rain

one day it was
very cloudy
everybody in the place
was getting rowdy
we couldn't go outside
because of the rain
how could you be
in such a place
with no pain
what was
the point of this poem
i don't know
maybe the boredom

-Diego

From The Beat: It might be difficult to explain the oscillation of boredom and pain, that characterizes incarceration — but that's what we think your poem here is portraying.

Broken Heart

i remember when we used to
take our long walks to the park
until you broke my heart
i remember when we used to
sit on the hill and just chill
while the cold wind hit our skin
as the sun came down
until you broke my heart
i remember when we used to
hang out wit' our folk
and just choke
off that hah you-know
until you broke my heart
i remember when we used to
play truth or dare
while i played in yo' afro hair
until you broke my heart
why did you have to
break my heart from the start
now that we are apart
i have a broken heart
why did you break it from the start

-Broken-heart La

From The Beat: You've been writing the most beautiful love lyrics. Thanks for sharing, so all can hear it, even those with a broken-hearted spirit. Strange how sad words sound sweet music when heard.

Constant Fumbled Feelings

let it burn
it's my turn
to show what's real
if it was me
messin' with another chick
how it make you feel
i don't have a confession
i'm just left guessin'
while you beating around the bush
it was my heart you was testin'
and they say still waters run deep
that's how i feel now
through the whole situation
i am still wondering how
how can someone act like they care
put on a front
but once you're not there
they would throw up so much dust
an' break all your trust
i thought it was love
but it was just lust
i'm gon' stop here
'cause if i continue
it would take all day
i mean
man, i'm hurt
and have so much to say
my feelings constantly
get played with like i'm some kind of toy
i'm over you and crying now
but now these are tears of joy
but you not concerned
you had your turn
but when you learn
just let it burn
and deal with your emotions
you caught my lips on fire
and now you want me to swallow an ocean

-Lil' Cell

From The Beat: When someone betrays you, it's your feelings that slay your love, till tears from your eyes are so mixed with disappointment and lies that heartbreak and joy come together and to destroy peace of mind. Joy that you're set free from the lies, but heartbreak 'cause you loved a disguise!

Placements For Money

I feel that the system forces troubled youth into programs of several months duration — for money!

The system sets up kids who are given six-to-nine-to-twelve month programs, because the system knows darn well that they will probably AWOL (run). Then when they get caught up, the process starts all over again — which all costs extremely large amounts of money.

-Bizzy

From The Beat: We'd say that so-called easy money that keeps bringing you back to the spot is a set-up, too. Maybe it's like a pimp and a prostitute, with you playing the part of the trick. Stop running and stick, then leave the game and the system quick.

What's Up, Beat

This Young Giggles. I want to say what's up to all the homies in Camp Sweeney, Yung Lazy and all them homies. G-vol! What's cracking?

I just want to tell y'all to keep it cool. You don't want to be in this motherless place where I am, 'cause I know I don't! Y'all know what I mean? Y'all better holla back at a homie that give you all respect. Be safe.

-Giggles

From The Beat: No disrespect, but we're not printing shout-outs to or from anyone, unless there's some real advice on how to get and stay free from the system. Put some wisdom in your pieces, and we'll print 'em, on citas!

Or Run?

what's up beat
i talked to my p o
today and she
said i'm going
to a group home
and she said
i might run
if i go to a group
home nearby
and she said
that i might
be going
for a year
she tripping
for doing all that
that's the kind of stuff
that make me wanna run
so what you think beat

-Lil' Creep

From The Beat: For sure the system can have your mind twisted! But the more it feels like a set up to make you run, the more you need to focus on getting your program done. Don't run away, and you'll go home to stay — no PO, no warrant, no case. But if you run, you'll be back in this same place.

What's Cracking?

It's the homeboy, Juanito. Man, these folks taking hella long to come interview me! I ain't tripping. This homeboy could do time.

Last week I got into it with a rival. Staff broke it up. But we mixed it up! What's up to the homeboys. Stay up.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: It's a good thing you know how to do time. 'Cause if you keep messing with rivals in the system, you'll get plenty more down the line. (Or you could start to listen.)

Mad

Waiting on Camp is makin' me hella mad 'cause you can be waitin' in here for however long they make you, and you can't do nothin' about it.

Also the system makes me mad — the judge, some staff in this place. There is a lot of stuff that makes me mad, but those are my main reasons.

-Dante

From The Beat: Sometimes we gotta maintain and not complain. Don't trip, let the future decide. Maybe there's a good reason that Camp hasn't came for you yet. Keep yo' head up!



Do My Time

i am saying
i'll do my time
since i did the crime
i ain't scared
to do my time
i would rather be
on the street
doing something
positive

-Lil' A

From The Beat: Use this time to rethink your life on the street, so when you're released — you'll stay free, positively!

Love For Life

i want to drop these linias (lines)
to a firme haina (tight girl)
i miss you too much
and i love you more and more
chula, i can't live without you
and i think about you all the time
here in this cell i start to cry
'cause you're not by my side
but i take you with me
all the time inside my heart
'cause you are so special in my life
mi amor no te puedo olvidar
(I can't forget my love for you)
i miss your touch
i miss your words
i just want you to know
that you have a firme vato (tight guy)
that's down for you
no matter what the situation is
i love you for life

-Chiquilin

From The Beat: Promises of love comfort a troubled heart for a while, but if you mean to be there for her with more than words — you'll need to change your life style.

school. I went to the nurse office and she called my mother. Luckily my mom worked at the hospital. When I got sober, I thought about it. Me and my folks had robbed a person for his bundle and shoes and money.

-Bo B2

From The Beat: You mentioned how you overcame the physical pain but the mental lesson? Are you going to think twice when you get the urge to take something that isn't yours? This might be how you were raised but it's not working to your advantage. You're locked up. After working with you in The Beat and seeing your writings, we know that you are smart and can be intelligent by using your smarts for bettering yourself and others. How can you respect your life and freedom and other people's lives more?

Dreams

it was a dark
and stormy night
not a candle
was lit
there was no light
everyone
was sleeping
in their beds
and everyone
was dreaming
dreams
in their heads
some were dreaming
of candy
others of sheep
some were dreaming
of funnies
other times
they'd weep

-Diego

From The Beat: Creative ending. You have a way of making fairy-tale rhymes, dip suddenly into an adult world of pain and crying. And then we see your fairy tales as a brief escape from a grim reality.

My Worst Experience

my most worst experience
was when i had one of my girls
at the house and another
girl popped up outside
but i had my brother help me
he told her i wasn't there
but it happened again
and she was there
waiting outside for me

-Lamar

From The Beat: You're looking at the end, but roll it back to the beginning again. Whatever dirt you do, it will come back on you! So remember this fact, and then clean up your act.

Lil' Corn

i hate the hall
it make me think
'bout goin' stupid
on the out is all

-Cartier

From The Beat: Go stupid on the out, and you'll be right back here — without a doubt!

False Accusations

The worst experience I ever had, when I look back on it, was when I got blamed for setting a house on fire. It felt so bad because I didn't do it — but they made me believe that I did do it even though I really didn't!

I'm in here right now for robbery. I pleaded innocent, because I didn't have anything to do with it! I was in a whole different area from where they said I was.

But once I said that I didn't do anything and had started talking back to the police officer, he took me to the ground! Then he choked me out, and I passed out! When I woke up, I was in the back seat of a police car.

-Rasheed

From The Beat: Those both sound like truly frightening, disturbing, upsetting — bad experiences! Why do you think they came after you? Have you ever started fires? Have you ever committed a robbery? We're not saying what happened to you was right, but we're wondering why it happened to you at all. It seemed like that was excessive force, if you want to, speak out against it.

My Only Grandpa

My worst experience was losing the only grandpa I ever had. He wasn't my birth grandfather, but he was there since day one.

Finding out he was gone really put a hole in my heart. I never cried; I just expressed it in my own way, on my own time. But my time is up to write.

-Tyrone

From The Beat: What are some of your memories of your grandpa? Did he teach you anything? Was he a funny guy, a serious guy? Tell us more about this man who was so special to you.

Speech About Getting Shot

The worst thing I could say is when I got shot in the leg. I was high off a pill. Me and some folks were on the track smoking weed and drinking. When we were gettin' dumped at one of my partners started blastin' back. It felt like a rock hit my leg. I stumbled and shook it off, we did it movin' to our spot.

I was sweating a lot but I knew sweat didn't go down my leg. I stopped and looked at my sock and it was red. Then my shhh started throbbin'. So I went to the house and smoked some purple.

I went to the hospital the next morning, when I went to school. I went to the nurse office and she called my mother. Luckily my mom worked at the hospital.

When I got sober, I thought about it. Me and my folks had robbed a person for his bundle and shoes and money.

-Bo B2

From The Beat: You mentioned how you overcame the physical pain but the mental lesson? Are you going to think twice when you get the urge to take something that isn't yours? This might be how you were raised but it's not working to your advantage. You're locked up. After working with you in The Beat and seeing your writings, we know that you are smart and can be intelligent by using your smarts for bettering yourself and others. How can you respect your life and freedom and other people's lives more?

What's Up, Beat?

i just seen my homeboy in here
he came in for a pistol
he wrote me a letter
telling me i was stupid for getting caught
and now he is in here too
i got five homeboys in here
but i ain't trippin' if i go to the 'y'
'cause i'm down for mine
this homeboy is out

-Lil' Creep

From The Beat: You have the courage of a lion, but you don't need to be tryin' to act a fool! We've printed many pieces from CYA, and not one has said, "Y'all want to be here." Okay? Some wrote foolish stuff before, but none after. You need to wake up before you create an irreversible disaster. The Y is no laughter.

Jumped And Shot

The worst experience I ever had was when I went to the carnival — and after it ended, I got jumped! Everybody thinks getting jumped hurts. But it really doesn't.

Some boys from another part of town, jumped me. And my potnas came and got them off me. Then I took my shirt off and fought, one on one, against one of the boys. I was beating him up when five-oh came.

We all ran and came up again. And we started fighting. The boy I was fighting started bleeding. Then somebody from the crowd pulled out a gun and shot me in the leg two times — and I passed out! I woke up in the hospital.

-Lil' Fesster

From The Beat: You tell your story simply and vividly. It's a surprise when you say getting jumped doesn't hurt, until we understand you mean in comparison to getting shot twice! Change the way you're living your life, 'cause it leads to nothing nice: jails, hospitals, and — what's left? Oh yeah, death.

Chillin' At Camp

Yeah, what's up. It's me, Lil' Rickie. Finally made it to The Beat Within up here at Camp. Just chillin' with the homeboys, trying to pimp my program. So to all the homies going to Camp, just pimp it! To Green Eyes and Lil' Leo, stay up.

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: Lil' Leo ran, and now he's locked up again. Lesson one: don't run. When it went down, Green Eyes was just chilling with the pack; and now he's in max. Lesson two: if you don't stop it, don't stay and watch it — 'cause it ain't coo'!

Missing

I'm missing everything to be missed

I'm missing out so my feelings are always pissed

I'm missing out so I know it's a number of things I can put on a list

I'm missing out, but I wish I was next to the ocean

I think of dumb stuff, but I wish it was slicker than lotion,

but I know it's motion,

but I'm missing out, so I know that's not a good potion.

-Boog Money

From The Beat: If you could turn back the hands of time, what would you do differently so that you wouldn't miss out on so much?

The Ghetto

The ghetto making an automatic instead of a wooden boy like Geppetto. You can't knock the ghetto where you was born and raised.

Now I'm cravin' a hustle, getting' paid, just to bubble in the ghetto, it's trouble.

-Randy

From The Beat: We like the way you compare the kinds of kids the ghetto makes to the kind of kids Geppetto makes. No Pinocchios in the ghetto, huh? But can you make yourself into something even if that's not what you're environment is trying to make you? What would you really like to do or be?



How I Feel

i feel like a ho'
to this system
i lost my brother
to this game
it feel like
i'm losin' it
but i smoke purple
and drink henny
to maintain
smoke a 'port
to boost me up
see your face
on a shirt
and it juice me up
an' laughin' at these
fake ninjas so i won't
bust 'em up
i'm tired of these fakes
claimin' you
knowin' you didn't
love them
but these fakes
just keep on reppin'
you a souljah like slim
you rep the best like 'pac
you ball to fall
an' dodge the cop
rest in peace
it a heaven
for a gee
go dumb in heaven
m a t

-Lil' Mat

From The Beat: The game and the system go hand in hand, and so does an early grave. Understand? We're not telling you don't grieve your brother, but don't let the game take yet another. Smoke, drink and sell coke all night, will have you dead or locked up for life. You may love the street, but the street loves nobody, except maybe a face on a shirt when he's buried six feet in the dirt. Look down from heaven, Mat — tell your brother to quit when he's home free! RIP.

The Games

you can play the game
different ways
by getting paid
on the block
or working for minimum wage
or you could be balling
doing wrong
or up in the hall
trying to call home

-Young Playah

From The Beat: When you're living at home with your family, making money legitimately is best the way to make your pay, even if it's just minimum wage. 'Cause with a job history and a recommendation, you can move on to a better-paying position.

Right Now, I'm Thinking . . .

First of all, I thank my jefita for giving me Bird, that is the only hyna i love. I wish I would be with her in the house.

To all the homitos, rest in peace, right now I'm in my desk writing these couple of letras.

-Osito

From The Beat: Thanks for this short word. A little thanks, a little love, and a little respect. Keep writing.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of wishing,
I'm tired of being in jail,
I'm tired of hearing people talk shhh,
I'm tired of being away from my son,
I'm tired of people telling me that I'm leaving soon,
But I don't go anywhere.
I'm tired of living the life that I am living.

Lil' Reil

From The Beat: This kind of life can be tiring. What keeps you going? If you are tired of the life you're living, what do you need to do to change it? What is the most important thing to you in your life? Maybe you should focus on that and work from there.

Missing You

I just wanted to drop these lines
To a firme haina very special to me
Because I found true love and honesty
That no one has ever given to me
Mija, you are always going to be in my heart
Body and soul
Chula, since you've been gone
I think about you todo el tiempo (all the time)
And I cry every night
Because I want you with me
No matter what mija
I will always be here for you
And remember, no importa
How far apart we may be from one another
My love will never die for you mi reyna
I will always be true
Porque te amo (because I love you)
You choose life your way
I hope the best for you always
But I want you to know
That I care and love you anyways
Sabes mija, I'm for real
I'm never going to give you up
Because it's going to take a
Miracle for me to love someone new
Chiquita, you know you are the first and the last
En mi corazon (in my heart)
Pero sabes, chula (but you know)
I will forever be loving you
And only you
Gracias por todo (for everything)
You know that I'm here
For you por vida, amor y respeto (for life, love and respect)
The one who's keeping you
Forever, Chuquilin.
To Elizabeth

-Chuquilin

From The Beat: Chuquilin, this is a really sweet piece. Does Elizabeth know how you feel? You should share this piece with her.

I Love You

I love you, please don't leave me
I'm so scared, I don't want to lose you,
I love the way you make me smile
When I tell you to wait awhile.
Baby, I love you sooo much.
How can I describe it?
Tears come down my cheeks and I would laugh
'Cause you'd wanna peek.
Baby, please don't leave,
I wanna be with you for the rest of my life
Just to let you know I care,
I care about you, I pray for you every night
Wishin' you were by my side to hold me tight,
Baby, I love you so much
I miss your soft and gentle touch,
I don't know what else to say,
I just wanna go the right way.
I never thought I'd fall in love.
But I was wrong, because how I'm in love with you,
What we got is something special,
something I'll always cherish.
Baby, I love you so much I don't know
what to do if you leave,
My life won't feel whole.
I wanna be with you always,
Together for many days,
I know it hasn't been that long,
But baby, I just wanna say,
"I love you."

-Guero

From The Beat: Love is so powerful. Is this the first time you're telling her how you feel? You should share this with her. What will you need to do to be able to tell her this in person?

What's Up, Homies?

What's up, homeboys? This is the homie Green Eyes from Hayward just chillin' in max waitin' to see where they're gonna send me. I might be on my way to "YA." I don't even know. I go to court on May 12, 2004 for trial to see what goin' on with my case.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: We with you the best of luck with your case. How can you convince the judge that you deserve another chance?

How Do You Decide

some people say
that it is part of being
your own person
and that you got to
put yourself
before anybody else
others say
that it ain't right
to make another
endure what
you aren't willing
to endure yourself
how do you decide

-Corey

From The Beat: If you mean you're doing time for someone else's crime, and you don't know if you should tell or just endure this juvenile hell — maybe you should ask yourself, "Am I about to go out and do the same crime myself?" If so, you might as well stay inside and use the time to change your mind. Then when you get out, living right and staying free is what you'll be all about. By the way, most of this piece is right from our topic. Next time, try to use more of your own words.



Happy B'Day MAT

happy birthday to my big brother Mat
he's gone but not forgotten
so he live through me an' i got to shine an' stun
without him on april twenty-fifth
he would have been twenty
but in the game ninjas hate
but why they had to hate him
he loved to see a youngster shine
and get money on they grind
that why i go dumb for my bro'
an' rep you to i'm gone
this summer i'm gettin' a tatt
of yo' face on my arm
i got to keep you lit
like the purple we used to smoke
r-i-p m-a-t
ask god to bless me
an' stay close
i'm going dumb till my last breath
i'd trade it all to ball with you again
i learned from you i have no friends

happy birthday m-a-t
watch over me
yo' lil' brother tyree
happy birthday ju-ju
on the twenty-eighth
r-i-p m-a-t & ju-ju

-Lil' Mat

From The Beat: It's sweet that you want to use your brother's name to refer to you, and that you'll always remember the joys or pains he shared with you. But if you're truly living to bring him shine through what you do in your life, then it's time to get off the grind, all right? You already know the game is straight dirt, and everybody in it is bound to get hurt. You don't need to go the way he did. If you want to remember him, live to have a family with kids. We know you plan to go back to school, but that square-thug plan just ain't cool. 'Cause the square always gets played, and he does the time for the thug's bad ways.



To Tha People That Cook Tha Food

Tha food is nasty. It arrives up here cold. A lot of stuff has green stuff in it.

I would like to tell you that you manners are unprofessional an' wrong. From tha top of my mind, move on.

-Peter George B5

From The Beat: Here's another example of why it's better to stay home than to give them the opportunity to put you here. You can complain all you want about the food, but the only way to avoid it is to avoid the Hall.

To Tha Love of My Life (Moms)

Wass up? I know that you ain't gone see this, but I was just chillin' an' wanted to express my love. You tha only one in my life that I'm 100% in love with,

Please forgive me for all of my wrong. Thanks for prayin' fo' me. You stay strong.

-Peter George B5

From the Beat: What do you think your mom wants most from you? Is it in your power to give it to her? Why don't you?

My Speech To The World

My name is Juicy-Loo, and I'm a detainee in B5. Today I want to do a speech about these last three months of my YGC experience.

On January 26, 2004, I did something that had no point to it. I got caught, and I was sent to the cops' headquarters. As I was sitting there in a cold room, I was wondering what was going to happen to my butt. As I was thinking, two cops stripped me naked to do that "squat and cough." I didn't have nothing on me, and I just guess they wanted to see my genitals. Excuse my French, but it's something that really happened.

After two hours, and having my fresh Foot Locker white tee taken away, I was brought to this hell hole (YGC). I was nervous, but ready for whatever.

After doing all the paper work, and after taking that shower, I was given the chance to call my mother (Mom's baby boy is a menace), and it felt bad to hear my dear mama cry her heart out.

My time was up. It was time to go to the unit, which was B5. I was there once, but not for long — 45 min. to be real wit' you. But this time, I know I was going to be here for a long time.

A week became a month, then two, then three.

Now I'm here waiting to go to trial. All I can say to anybody out there that's young ad heading the way I just came from is to stop and think before you act, because you don't want to be here with me. Now it's up to you to listen, because this has been a bad experience, and I would like to stop any young person that's heading this way. This is not the place to be. All I have to say is stop and think before you act!

Juicy-Loo B5

From The Beat: There is a lot of good advice in this piece for any youngsters who are thinking that the Hall ain't nothin'. But if you're giving a speech to the world, wouldn't you want them to know more than how you were stripped naked and how your mama cried? For example, do you think the world understands the streets you come from, or how people struggle for the basics, or how many youngsters your age aren't with us any more because guns are as easy to get as bubble gum? The world is a big stage; you should use it for big speeches!

CYA Or Nut House

I'm headed to CYA, fist down, walking through the doors, thinkin' 'bout the old days, the way I used to get paid, laid back in the cuts, dipping in buckets 'til it overheated, then hop the bus.

The memories run though my mind I can't cry, put in work for what? All I got was time.

Failed my psych evaluation. They say I'm a nut. They say I'm kinda loose in the head. Probably be locked up in a padded room with my hair loose, looking like a nut.

Man, I'm still not goina give up, so fo' show fo' show I'ma keep my head up.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: Well, you're our favorite nut. Do you agree with the psych evaluation? Do you think you're "kinda loose in the head?" If you look around, what percentage of the young men you're locked up with would you say have some mental problems? Are you getting any treatment now for what ails you? How would you evaluate the mental health services where you are? Once you get into your padded room, we hope you'll write us and tell us what it's like.

A Good Day

Today was a good day.

It was nice and cool today.

Everything went well for me today.

I'm hoping that the rest of the days also go well.

I came to school late, but I made up for it.

I did my work and now I'm going to go to work.

Then after that I'm probably going to go home and then go to sleep.

-Rodrigo YTEC

From The Beat: It was a good day for you and hopefully for others. We hope you keep your happiness awake and keep heading forward. It feels good to do the right thing, doesn't it?

Be Gully

Beat Within! Beat Within! How you doin'? Well I'm coo' just tryna be easy in this shady unit, tired of bullthings that go down in here.

I been down and out, but I got pull in this place — ice cream, pizza, burgers, and salads, etc. That helps wit' yo' time writing big letters in the room.

Get caught wit' a porno or a pencil then they just be like, "Do 250 push-ups!" I just knock that out. Not straight, of course, like 70 here 50 there. Just get it down over with so I have no worries at all. Do it all so we go all out in the units and on the streets.

I'm runnin' out of time right now. I will hit back next week on the rebound. Be gully, because talk is dead. They don't like us to be talkin' or out our room.

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: You should be tired of all this. That should make you want to get out and stay out of the Halls!

Ups And Downs

Forget y'all askin' about stress. It seems like my life is in a tornado right now. It's obstacles comin' in from all over, and I'm just movin' in a circle. I'll work one problem out, and here's another problem. This shhh needs to end or go to another level.

Tha Halls ain't shhh. We sit in school an' study bullshhh. You ask for harder work an' they wanna question the progress that you made in tha past.

After they find out that you handled yo' stuff in the past, they want you to go through someone else. They say "they just wanted to know a little about you." I mean, what tha hell? Don't waste my time.

-Peter George B5

From The Beat: We'd be interested to know what you think the Hall should be doing for you. How could your time in here not be wasted? Do you owe anyone anything? Does anyone owe you anything? What?

This Is My Speech

I was going out with this female, right, and we was cool. We was makin' love and the other stuff, you know. But one main thing, she got pregnant and she said it wasn't mine.

So later on in the year she has the baby. By that time I get another girl on my team, so my old female has a baby and now she say it was mine. So now I'm stuck in a situation where I got a girl and my girl don't know, but I don't want to tell her. So I have a confession to make.

-Boy Boy B5

From The Beat: We can't give you relationship advice because we've all had problems in that department. On the same hand, though, experience tells us that what you try to keep hidden in the dark always comes out in the light. So, if it were us, we would tell our new girl about our old girl, and even about mama's baby, just to clear the air. But then, again, if the air gets fouled by your confession, don't sue us!

In The Gotta

Living life in the fast lane, bolo solo, ever since I was a young one. Pops blowin' thought moms was hoing.

All hell broke loose livin' in the ghetto: Pro Wings, bald head, a snotty-nosed kid that I was watching, drug dealers make ends, and have a lot of stuff.

At a young age I was a loose cannon on the streets. Wherever you found trouble you found me. You wonder how I got my nickname JD, a young sav, tryna hustle, tryna eat, even though it was big food at the house.

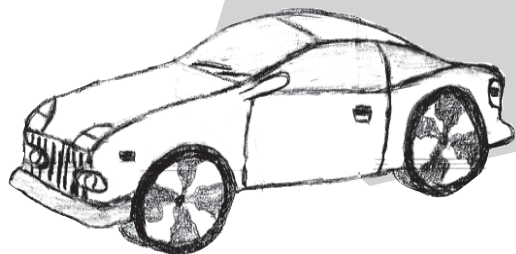
I felt different so I stayed out, never went to school, cut and bounced, only had bus fare for the whole day. Somehow, some way, I ended up with money to last me the whole day. Independent in my own eyes, gotta survive, hit the wrong curve, almost died.

Looking back, tears run down my eyes. So many things I could've done, but ended up being dumb. Can't keep switchin' lanes without looking, I crash, get right back out there and start jukin' in the fast lane. Gotta watch out — if death didn't get you, it will happen some day if you messed around in the game, some way somehow.

Like I said before, you do dirt, you will be dirt.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: This is a very sad but illuminating piece about the brutal reality of life in the streets. But we can't agree with your final conclusion that if you do dirt you will be dirt. We do agree that if you do dirt, dirt will be returned in full measure. But that is different from saying that you are dirt. We believe all people are capable of great good and great harm, and that the circumstances of their lives often predict which course they will take. Anyway, we're sorry for your tears, but grateful for your realization that the dark hole that was dragging you down offers nothing but the living death of a cold cell, or the real death in a cold grave.



Gotta watch out — if death didn't get you, it will happen some day if you messed around in the game, some way somehow.



My Speech Is Based On Women

I think no matter what, a woman should not get beat because women was put on the earth for a reason — 'cause without women there would be no men.

Women is the heart to every man, 'cause if I ever see a women getting beat, I'm 'a beat that man because women make the earth. Men do too, but women is part of us. That's my speech based on women.

-David B2

From The Beat: We agree that men should never beat women. At the same time, why do you think men beat on men so much? Would it be better if there was just less beating, period?

Hard Times

"It was two sets of foot prints in the sand, then it was one set of foot prints in the sand. When times get hard, God do walk with me. He carry me."

When I read this in The Beat I will be a few days from court. I've been waiting for this court day for a whole month. They are trying to 707 me, so I know I'm not gonna get out.

I know God will carry me through this because times is hard right now and they can get harder. But I pray every night that they don't. I hope, on May 14, they make it easy for me..

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: Hang in there and don't give up. We hope God helps you through this, and makes your situation easier for you. We know how hard it is to be in this position, but it's not easy in any position. When you look for the "easy" it can lead to bad things. But even though we know it's hard to avoid the minefields that are ready to blow up in your face, it's even harder to be a prisoner, so do what you know you have to do to stay free.

To My Baby

I never knew I could have so much feelings toward someone so quick.

I had a man, so I didn't know who to pick 'cause the first time I laid eyes on you, I was digging yo' style.

I just had to stop and stare for a little while. I noticed yo' hair, it was long and perfect, that's how I like it.

Then I tripped off yo' race, Full blooded Samoan With a beautiful face.

I didn't know how to talk to you, I didn't have the right words to say So I just let it be

And we went our own separate ways.

But faith brought us together All 'cause of that one little letter Telling you how I feel

And how I stay keeping it real

I wanna get to know you more

I wanna be with you and only you

'Cause every day I feel you even more

So hold me down until the day

I walk out through these doors.

(dedicated to my baby, you know who you are)

-Jazze GU

From The Beat: Nice flow, lucky man. We hope he's living his life positive and will help you build a healthy, happy life once you return to freedom.

Living The Life

Livin' life in here is can as hell, but I'm still living the life. I'm about to get out of this box, you know, just do the time and get it over.

Ain't no point in runnin'. Ain't no point in that, but just do it and get it over with.

-James B1

From The Beat: You give great advice about doing your time and getting it over with, but when you say that you're "still living the life," aren't you just setting yourself up to go back to the Hall? We sure hope not, but we've watched many other youngsters leave, only to come back again and again. We hope that's not the life you want for yourself.

Changed Or Not?

I really don't got nothing to say. I mean, I've been through a lot of shhh. Pero, I haven't let all that get in my way. I know it don't seem like it 'cause I'm up in dis place again. Pero that's aight, though. I'm 'a make it through. I'm 'a let all this make me stronger and help me be more determined!

I just got back from YA, and although I can't say that I'm gonna stop gangbanging, what I could say is that I've had a lot of extra time to think and see a lot of things over. I've had a lot of time to see things differently and stuff like that.

I do want to stop using and start going to school, pero I can't say that I'll stop doing my thing on the block, but I will do things differently and not do as much shhh as I used to. Pero pues yeah, that's all I got to say.

To the homies up here, keep yo' heads up to the sky and pues, you know the rest. To the homie in here, don't even trip homes, I'll be lookin' out for you! I'm 'a cut this short until next time. Hasta alrato

-Giggles GU

From the Beat: It sounds like you really want to change, but in order to do that, you have to stay focused and surround yourself with positive people. Taking care of your drug issues is good. We hope you'll do the same someday soon with your gangbanging.

A Challenge

My eyes observed you and my heart approved you

I knew it had to be true because all I wanted to do was feel the touch of you, too . .

Could this be lust or love, just 'cause it glitters doesn't mean it is gold

And I've been told

that I should hold

onto being oh so bold

It was hard but we made it this far

Anything in life worth having

Comes with a challenge

I love you . . . secret lover

-Mazina GU

From The Beat: We hope this looks good and is good. Let it go if it's not.

Bangin' Got Me Here

Wazz up Beat? They call me Malo, and I bang. I been banging for a long time, but that almost got me killed lots of times.

The people I called homies, they told me that selling drugs was good, gang bangin' was good, but they were wrong. I still got love for all my homies, but that got me here locked up.

All the decisions I'm making are messing up my life. Now my PO wants to send me to the Ranch, but I hope I can go home and see my family, and see my homies. See you soon. Lots of love. Your little homie,

-Malo B1

From The Beat: We can see how torn you are Malo. You love your homies, but what they taught you led you to juvenile hall where you don't want to be. Experience tells us that if you go back to the block and hang with your homies, it won't be long 'til you're back in the Hall, and each time you come in makes it that much harder to stay out. Sometimes, Malo, we all have to make tough choices. We think you're at one of those crossroads where one road leads to the life you hope to have, and the other — the one you're on now — leads either to jail or the grave. We know what choice we hope you make, but it's entirely in your hands. Think wisely.

Missing My Ghetto Queen

When I talk to you, girl, you do too much. You my ghetto queen, and forever I'm gonna be yo' thug.

When I was on the block, you kept the house on lock and when the money stopped you kept yo' love hot. We was both destined to be like Adam and Eve. You and me the only thing we had in common was love, and when I look into yo' eyes, I was lifted above my thug love you got forever like love letters.

You know that yo' man about his chedda, and we can do whateva. So pass the Hennesey.

Missing you kissing me. I'm felling remedy knowin' you missin' me, so where's the sympathy?

-Teflon Don B4

From The Beat: Hey, sounds like you can't live without your ghetto queen. If you love her and miss her so much, what the heck are you doing away from her? And, even more important, what the heck are you going to change when you get back together so that you can be with her instead of writing about her?

Sick And Tired

Well, I am sick and tired of being here because every other week I go to court and they say the same thing and it's making me mad 'cause it has been hot all this week and these girls is really getting on my nerves. And any time now I am ready to blow up on a female and really not give a shhh. But I am just going to pray for that person and try to stay away and keep my coo', you feel me.

-Kristian GU

From The Beat: Being in the Halls can be really frustrating. But if you get in a fight it's just going to make things worse, as you know. So maintain yourself like the true souljah you are and ride it out.

The Homies

What's up homes up in the Halls? As for me, nothing brings me down, just hanging in there. I'm just thinking about the homies right now because I miss the homies.

The homies on the outs are probably up to no good and I feel that 'cause these ninjas think they're sick, but they're really soft on the inside, but it's cool because they don't know what's about to hit them, but to the homies in the Halls, I just can't wait to get out. Also, to the homies in the Hall, get out, but homies stay down and around, feel me?

-Young Monte YTEC

From The Beat: You have something special within yourself that makes you see what people are on the inside and out. You know your homies are up to no good, but is there anything you can do to try to get them on the right track? Have you ever tried to help them? Maybe you should tell them what you feel they are from the inside, maybe they'll get to realize it too and stop trying to be hard.

Closed Doors

I been here for three months behind closed doors and it ain't nice. Eat, sit, talk when they want you to. I be like, "Damn! I got to get from behind these closed doors because it ain't nothing nice."

Damn, you don't even know what a ninja like Wal-greens going through in this place. Ain't getting no sex because it ain't none. But that's what you got to go through behind closed doors.

-Wal-Greens B4

From The Beat: Yeah, you're right, it's terrible to be locked up anywhere. But if you think this is hard, you better start thinking about what they got waiting for you down the line. If you don't know what we're talking about, check out some of the pieces in The Beat Without.



Homegirls/Homeboys

I miss all the homies, everybody disappearing like a ghost. Some of my homeboys are at the Pen, County and the Hall, Camp and my homegirls are having their kids or are on the run.

Not seeing them makes me wonder if I would be in a situation like that when I get out. One of my homeboys that's in the Pen is facing 25-life. I just hope that God guides him. This homie is someone that I really look up to because he's been like a father figure in my life. Much love and respect; I'm out, late.

-Clumsy

From The Beat: Are you wondering if you'll be in their situation, or are you learning just how fragile your freedom is? We hope you learn from their mistakes instead of falling into the same traps that their example should point out to you.

Trying To Scare Me

I sit in my room starring on four white walls crying myself to sleep thinking of my family. Thinking why am I facing CYA? Is it for something I did or something I am taking the fault for?

Man I hate these freaking probation officers trying to scare me, telling me, "Man, I'm sending you to the Y." Eighteen months with cops pointing guns at you, that shhh don't scare me.

I guess I made my choices and they were wrong. Now I don't know if I am going though. To be continued.

-Anon

From The Beat: Is there anything you can do or say that will help with the potential sentence that you're facing? We feel you when you say that you're not scared of the Y, but given the option we're sure you'd prefer some other circumstances. We're curious to see where you take this as you continue it, and we hope that the next time 'round you sign your name so we can give you credit.

My Worst Experience

My worst experience is when I got locked up at Hillcrest for six months. They have terrible food service!

I never thought it would be this way, but I know I can make it through all the struggles that life has to offer. But, like every one says, only the strong survive.

-Roderick

From The Beat: The idea that "only the strong survive" is a corruption of the original statement, which is that those who survive are the strongest. It may not seem different to you, but it is. You take the phrase to mean you must be "take-it-like-a-man" strong, tough, hard. But on the streets, many, many young people who take that stance end up dead. So, according to the meaning of the original phrase, those who end up dead were not strong. In other words, strength is measured by survival. If you survive — even if it means you were soft, humble, kind-hearted, respectful and law abiding — then you would be considered the strongest or the fittest. It's not your hard behavior that makes you strong, but the fact that you survive.

LA Group Home My Worst Experience

My worst experience is when, in 2003, the judge said she was sendin' me to a group home in LA! A week later they sent me on a plane! So I got picked up at the airport by the group home!

As soon as I walked in, hella ninjas muggin' me nasty 'cause word got around that someone from the Bay Area was 'bout to be there! By dinner I got hit up by everyone. I went to the bathroom and other fools from a rival gang jumped me.

I was getting jumped every other day for like four months till the group home was 'bout to take me to the Hall in LA, I was in the car, and jumped out at a stop sign and ran. I was in the streets of LA 42 days till I got on Greyhound and came back..

-Young Smokey

From The Beat: Was it easier being on the streets of LA than being in the group home? Did you turn yourself in when you came back, or did you get caught up in some new drama? What do you think "the system" should do with you? Can you suggest any program or system that would serve the interests of "justice" while also serving the interests of a positive future for you?

Why Sprinkle Salt

Why sprinkle salt
when I'm tryin' ta shine
You got your own business
why you all in mine
I've told you once before
all that weak hatin', stop
that's real talk off the top

-Blanca

From The Beat: Real talk off the top? How are you tryin' to shine? Shining in the Hall? The real shine comes from within, and it doesn't matter how much salt is sprinkled — no one can tarnish it.

Lies

Well I'm gonna tell you about something that happened to me a couple of weeks ago.

I got a letter from my lady talking about it's over because I cheated on her. I was like, what? Who the hell did I cheat on her with? And then I thought about it for a minute, and I remembered that there was this one female right before I got locked up that got mad because I wouldn't mess with her. Then she told me, "I'll get you one day."

So that's the female that probably told her that I messed with her. Then I got a letter from her again that said, "Don't trust your boy 'cause she told me every thing that you do."

She told me some of the things that he said, and all it seemed like he was trying to get at my lady 'cause none of the stuff was true. I really do love her and never did try to hurt her in any way.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Of all the experiences we've had, nothing is harder than human relationships. All we can say is that if you are truly innocent of cheating on her, then just keep telling her. If she truly feels you, she'll know if you're playing her or not. If she just can't trust you (even if she has no reason to distrust you), then your relationship probably will not work. Love is pain. But then, it's so joy!

It's A Shame

It's a shame when ya feel for ya life there's no hope

An' ya life will only consist of ya slangin' coke

Makin' ninjas mess wit ya paper choke

Live a coo' 25 years then ya croak

But that's the life that I lead that's the life I chose

Could've went the opposite was an' stayed in school

But naw, I like money an' I like it fast

I love it when females walk up an' shake that class

I love it blood an' ain't finst to leave it

Even though this game could be deceiving

Patna talkin' he ya best friend next on ya he schemin'

Trust me blood I see it

Go to a party an' get left bleedin'

Pockets empty 'cause ninjas be thievin'

-Young Smokey

From The Beat: Where is that fast money you like so much now? Who are those females struttin' their stuff for now? When you know the consequences of your acts bring you here, when you know that homies can scheme on you, when you know that the simplest thing like a party can turn into war, why not give it a break and try something new?

Staff And Mom's Tears

The things that bring me down is when staff put me down. Also, when my mom starts to cry — the reason that it brings me down is because I can't stand to see my mom cry over me. I wish I could stop my mom's pain. Hopefully I be out so I can help moms out.

To all ya'll dat's "gettin' windy" and getting released, just try to value all the things you got and show love to moms — feel me? Aight, I'm down.

-David

From The Beat: How does staff put you down? More importantly, what are you going to do to value your moms when you get out?

The Block

On the block posting up

With some gang-related homies

Trying to stay away from phonies

Patrolling our block from gang rivals

Coming home and not even trying to open the Bible

My mom is always worrying about me to not get in any more trouble

But I go back to the block ready for that rumble

Not thinking about the outcome until I get in trouble.

-D

From The Beat: And now that you're in trouble, what do you think about the outcome?

Like This

It went like this. It was a school day and I got in a fight. Then before I knew it, I was in Juvenile Hall for mostly that and some tardies! It was self-defense, too! To overcome that I easily could have ignored the situation.

-Jf

From The Beat: Sounds like you've learned a lesson about walking away. Good lesson. We hope you remember it. Good luck.

Game Over

Payback's a mother, ain't it

You messed up, now you can't change it

Shoulda never did what you did

You think I'm a punk, not this kid

'Cause you got me twisted, misunderstood

We from the same city, but you don't belong

in my 'hood

We used to be boys, but you ran your

mouth

But the clock is tickin' and the time is

runnin' out

Like they say, dogs that bark don't bite

Sleepin' with one eye open at night

I'm callin' your bluff 'cause you live a fake

life

-Peanut Head

From The Beat: We almost didn't publish this piece PH, and the reason is that it comes very near being a direct threat. Also, you don't make clear what the beef you're having is about, so while this has meaning to you, it is very difficult to find its wider meaning, to make it somehow universal. We know you have skills to enlighten, to teach, to explain. We wish you would use them.

Rest In Peace

Homeboy, why did you go,

Remember when we used to hit up the liquor store,

After we had drank it all, we still wanted some more,

But we were always at war,

'Cause of them folks, you're not here anymore

You are a firme homeboy, and you'll never be forgotten

And in our memories is where you'll always stay,

But don't worry, 'cause we'll all be there some day.

RIP Chent

-Jp

From The Beat: Your homeboy still watches you from behind the clouds. His soul is still watching you and protecting you. Have you learned anything from his death and the way he died? Do you want to spend the rest of your life watching you back?



The Devil Came But Not Really

I walked in the refrigerator to get something to eat. I seen a bunch of berries so I grabbed them. I started to eat them.

They were all blackberries, but I seen one red one. I was just about to eat it, and my little brother told me to stop and don't eat it. I asked him why, he told me if you eat it that the devil will come to get you. I started to laugh and told him that there was no such thing and you're crazy. I ate it anyway.

I heard what sounded like thunder, and it turned from day to night in seconds. Then I see little demons coming from the sky. I was hella scared. I didn't know what to do. Nobody was around. I was the only one there. The demons got closer and closer to me.

I woke up sweating like a sucka. It was about 5:30 a.m., very early. So I went into the living room and I seen my mom awake. I asked her why is she up so early. She told me she had a nightmare about me. I was kinda surprised. She asked me why was I up so early. I told her that I had a nightmare about the devil. She told me that the devil's trying to make you go back to your old life. He will continue to bother you but don't give in.

So later on that day I go and pick my girl from school. I take her back to my house because she said she was hungry. She asked me will I cook for her and I told her yeah. So I got back to my house and started cooking.

Moments later I heard somebody knock on the door and it was my two cousins. They were out of breath and looked like they saw a ghost. I opened the door told them to come in and asked them what happened. They told me that them ninjas just shot at them again. So I went to my room to grab my shhh.

My mom, my girl, and my little brother knew what was going on. They begged not to leave. I told my brother to finish cooking. My girl told me, if I go she was going to go home if I leave. I told her to handle your business and I'm going to handle mine.

Before I left I seen my mother crying. It felt a little strange, but I still left. I came back and my mom and my girl were both crying. So I started waiting and I heard a knock on the door. I said hold on cousin. I opened the door and got rushed to the ground. All I heard was, "YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!"

I knew it was all over. I tried to do good for a long time. It was not easy. I thought that I was going to be all right, but the devil got the best of me.

I was in Juvenile Hall for a few weeks before I got a letter from my girl. What she told me made me cry. She said everything happens for a reason. I thought of all the dirt I did, all those people I hurt, all those females I abused and realized I was doing way too much.

Then I thought about what my mom told me the morning that all that made my life go down the drain. That the devil was trying to make you go back to your old life, just be strong and ask God to help you. I guess I wasn't as strong as I thought I was. The devil didn't really come but he really did send his demons, the police. I didn't really understand the dream until I got arrested.

-J-Keaz

From The Beat: All those things that you regret doing — the dirt, the girls you hurt, etc. — could help you turn your life in the direction your mom wants you to. In other words, even if you are locked up now, that doesn't prevent you from going down that path your mom advised you about. Only the future is in your power to change; the past is over, except as guidance for what to avoid.

Last Of A Dying Species

I'm the last of a dying species
Be careful what you're singing, or you'll be sleeping with the fishes

I'm a savage reincarnated soul
That's lost not knowing which way to go
Too many conversation with the devil
Has turned me into a rebel

Leaving bloody scenes without a trace,
Made me see Lucifer in the mirror, but not my face
The sky's the limit,
But in my life,
The limit is the sky.
Don't ask why!

One way to live, and that's the gangsta life
Why you wanna go twelve rounds
Your prayers won't help homie
I'm a demon and the devil is my crony
Leave your family crying and praying
Just to show you I wasn't playing.

My Satanic soul makes me laugh while you lay on your back
Introduce you to a friend,
His name is Joe Black
Your story no one will ever tell,
It was a pleasure doing business with you
See you in hell.

-Scarface

From The Beat: You aren't Lucifer. You aren't the devil or Satan. You are a young man who's made your own choices (even if your options were limited) that led you to jail. We don't think a jail could hold Satan! Joe Black will visit all of us one day, so what's the point of threatening? The reality is that you are currently a slave of the system, whether you're the devil or not, and if you don't want to be a much longer-term resident of this place, or the many much worse places they have waiting for you down the line, you're going to have to make some changes in your life. Of course, that too is a choice for you to make, or not.

**The best unit I'ma be
in, in twenty days,
is my house.**

Last Days In The Hall

I'm back again! It's okay though. I went to a group home for ten months and had the choice to stay till July or do 30 days and get released off probation. I chose the thirty days in the Hall so I can get out in May instead of July. I'm leaving on the 21st. That's cool.

I'm up in my unit doing LMA (Large muscle activity) big brown style. It's cool up in here. It's my third time. It's the best unit I've been to.

The best unit I'ma be in, in twenty days, is my house. I'ma get a job down in Westfield Mall in San Francisco, work for Pac Sun, do it real big and legit, everything legal. Do it the way Big Brown taught me to do it, make money, save up and buy a house.

I'ma finish high school, further my football career, play for the Raiders, commit myself to excellence, bleed black and silver baby! To do that, I'ma go to college, go to Michigan to be a fighting Irish boy. I'm half Irish so you know I got to be an Irish. I want that Letterman's jacket with that big "ND," Notre Dame. Then get drafted to Oakland Raiders.

I'ma end here but before that I would like to thank some staff - B.G. Mrs. Light, Mrs. Mortenson, Mr. Mitchell, big buff Mitch, big Brown, big brother almighty Mr. Jones, Mrs. G (the best and coolest Filipina ever), Mr. Lynch, Mr. Blackshire, P- Mac, Mr. Pryre, Mrs. Clark, Mr. Austin, Mr. Bustos, Mrs. Brenda, Mrs. Price, Mrs. Khouir, Mr. Cory, Mrs. Garnika, Mr. Clark, Strip, Prince, If I forgot you, my bad, but you know who you are later.

-Big Mike

From The Beat: Since you're about to get out of here, it's really encouraging to see that you have a complete plan for your life. We think that often makes the difference between success and failure. It sounds to us that you have committed yourself to a positive path of goals and accomplishments. We're behind you all the way.

Dear Mom

I know that right now you are going through hard times, but don't worry. Everything is going to be OK because your son Chente Visente Para Toda La Gente is always going to be by your side.

And I just wanted to tell you not cry because everything is OK. I'm just asleep right now, and nowhere near you guys, but I'll come and visit you guys one of these days so. So whenever you hear footsteps in the house and you don't see nobody, just remember it's me.

Oh, and another thing that I wanted to tell you is to tell my little brother Mario to stay up and to don't back down from nobody just like I always used to tell him. And tell him to don't even trip about me because I'm in a better place now, up here in thugs' mansion.

And tell Mario to take good care of my home girl Kymberly. And just remember jefa que siempre las voy a querer con todo mi corazón a usted y a todas mis carnalitas. Digale a Henry que si se acuerda cuando fuimos a Sacramento en la "Chilindrina" la troca bien vieja, que se nos quedó en el freeway y nos tubiron que ir a recojer mis dos hermanas, esos eran los good times. (Mother, remember always that I love you and all my sisters with all my heart. Tell Henry if he remembers when we went to Sacramento in the Chilindrina, the old truck that broke down on us on the freeway, and my two sisters had to come pick us up. Those were the good times.)

And the last thing that I wanted to tell you is that I'll always have you in my heart, and all of my homeboys, and homegirls in my heart forever. Kemeloks.

-Giggles

From The Beat: We are very moved by this tribute to your fallen homie, written as if by him to his mother. Not only is it beautifully said, but it is a very creative way to approach this sad subject. Of course, Kemelok's mother has to pay the ultimate price for her son's life and death, because she remains alive to deal with the pain for the rest of her life.

No Winners, No Losers

It's time to stand tall
Get your back off the wall
You can be afraid but don't be scared
Leave your fears behind, it's a new road this time
When does it end? It's not for me to choose
So in the end no one wins and no one loses

-G

From The Beat: What does it mean to be afraid but not to be scared? We also find the last line enigmatic. The one thing we understand clearly — and think should be said over and over again — is to stand tall. Excellent advice!

Back Again

Not even one month
And I'm back here again
I shouldn't have done my crime
Like Mr. Brown tells us every time
It's only a couple of violations
But those can put me away
For months

And that's what I don't want
'Cause I rather be with my girl
And not be a squirrel
In a cage, eating nuts
When I can be in the
Outs and eat donuts
Fatima is her name

And that's the girl of my dreams
I'm sorry for not listening to you
And now I can't be with you
Soon we're going to be together
And I'm gonna take you wherever
So please don't leave me
Because I love you.

-Manotas

From The Beat: If you can't stay free for even a month, what's to prevent you from coming back yet again? What is it about living the life of a captive that allows you to risk it again and again? Why should Fatima believe your promises that you'll be together when you've shown how difficult it is to keep that promise?



My Wish

I have a million-dollar car and house. I get free money when I want. I have over ten miles of land all around me. I can do whatever I want in my house. I have three pool tables, a dance room where over five hundred people can come to, about fifteen maids, a clean record. No police can come more than two hundred feet from me, all the girls that I want, a good school for me, a wife, some kids of my own, and my own workshop where I can make anything I want. I build my own cars.

-Snake

From The Beat: You have beautiful dreams, Snake. What is standing between you and your dreams? What do you need to get what you want? An education? What is your dream job? What special skills, abilities, talents do you have you can nourish, to be able to realize all your dreams?

Hey

Hope you get out soon, Allen! Hey boy, hopefully you get out soon. I miss talking to you.

-Shorty

From The Beat: We hope you both get out soon, so you can hang together and encourage each other to stay out of mess and stay free.

You Can Get Emotionally Hurt

I would choose an intelligent mind, because if you know how to do certain things, you can get paid. Having a caring heart comes with being intelligent. You would know when to care, and how to go about showing it. When you care too much, you can get emotionally hurt.

-Afro Sly

From The Beat: Is getting paid the most important thing in your life? If so, why?

What are you going to do with all your big money, if you don't have a caring heart to love someone to share all that cash with? How do you earn money legally? Do you think there's a way to protect yourself from getting your heart broken? If so, will you please share your secret with all of us?

A New Dawn

Beautiful days have yet to come
Each one cashing its mellow
light through the crisp morning mist
to create a new dawn

-Paul

From The Beat: During one dawn last week, the early morning sky was all golden, with the orange sun peeping up over the Bay Bridge from Berkeley, you've gotta get out of Juvy soon, so you can see every dawn!

A Bad Trip

Walkin' down this long hallway
Staring down at this nasty toothpaste shhh
Just hopin' I am havin' a bad trip
Grab a mop and broom
I grab 'em by the stick
Still hopin' I am havin' a bad trip
In here for some shhh
Damn, I ain't havin' a bad trip

-Shorty

From The Beat: It sounds like you wish you could wake up and be outta Juvy. Is it awful to wish you were having a bad drug trip instead of your real life now in Juvy? How can you make your days in Juvy more productive? What can you learn in there?

My Whole Life

I do drugs and that is why I'm in this place. I miss my mom and my family. My dad is in jail, so am I what a curiosity. The reason I'm in here is I was buying drugs for my whole life. It is not my family's fault, but it kinda is, and it's my fault too.

-Richard

From The Beat: How do you think buying and using drugs your whole life has affected you? Do you think you're addicted to drugs? How are you doing in Juvy without them? Do you want to get into a drug program? Do you want to quit? Do you think your life will improve if you stop using?

Hey Kids

You may run
But you can't hide
Not in these days
Don't try to run
It is dumb

-Snake

From The Beat: Good advice, Snake. Just do your little time and get on with your life, is smart. Can you take your own advice?

My Life List

Good Things

Find friends
Go to park
Drugs
Boardgame
Gofor walk
Talk on phone
Go swimming
Work out
Find a Job
Card games
Run a mile
Eat a fruit
School
Friends
And much more...

Note: If any on wants to add anything, go ahead...!

-Snake

From The Beat: You break it down really well. What's your life like on the outs? Do you make more time for the good things or the bad things? Do you have friends who will encourage to get into things you like without using drugs? What do you like to do when you're alone? Will you go back to school? What kind of job do you want?

Bad Things

Guns
Badwords
Bad friends
Hurt yourself
Hurt others
Jail
Juvenile Hall
Steal
Break things

Kicking It In The Street

The system brings me down
So now I have to face it
Like a clown
Reminisce on kicking it in the street
Where the people are brown
That's why the system
Brings me down
I know one day
I'll wear that crown
That the people wear
When they've figured
All this shhhh out
That's how I know
All the small people
Including the system
Will be eight feet
In the ground
So wait 'til
You see my grind
I'm out

-Gata

From The Beat: Gata, what do you like to do besides kickin' it in the street? Do you go to school on the outs? Do you need a job? Do you want to go to college? Get married some day and have kids? Now's the time to work hard to build up for your future.

I Put Myself Here

I put myself here and the cops helped. I don't blame my parents or anybody else. I pay a lot. I have to do time and pay a lot of bills. It's la vida that I chose.

-Me

From The Beat: It's great that you take responsibility for your incarceration but it sounds like you haven't decided to change whatever you have to in your life. Do you have the strength to change your mind today and chose another life? If so, what new life would you choose? How will you get it?

RIP

RIP Creeper. May you rest in peace and watch over us! I'll always love you, homey! My homey is dead! I feel sooo bad. The day that I found out, 4/26/04, I cried all day. My homey is dead! RIP, Creeper!

-Guera

From The Beat: We're sorry for the loss of your friend Creeper. Why did your friend die, Guera? We know you're sad. Did Creeper die of natural causes or could his death have been prevented? Do you ever worry that your life may sometimes be in danger? If so, what can you do to keep yourself safe, when you get out?

Drugs Are Fun, But Is Jail Funner?

Yes, drugs are fun
But is jail funner?
Jail is not a good place to be in at all
Make a choice
Your life
Or In a cell?
Make it a good one

-Snake

From The Beat: You isolate the question, now what will be your answer, Snake? Are you strong enough to leave drugs alone when you get out? Do you need a program? If so, can you set yourself up to get into one from Juvy? Since you can't get to drugs in Juvy, you will be clean until you get out. Will that help you stay away from drugs?

Love Of My Life - Amor De Mi Vida

Being without my lady
Without having her touch my heart gently
I think it makes me go crazy
I hate that feeling inside
When I'm without her I feel empty inside
Damn, I missed our fourth anniversary
For doing something stupid
And being locked up
Don't know when I'm going to get out
But when I do and I'm with her I'll be completed

-Osito

From The Beat: It's funny how many of y'all in Juvy have girl and boyfriends who y'all love dearly, but that doesn't seem to keep y'all from messing up and getting locked up. Why not? Why doesn't having a girlfriend you love keep you out of trouble? What is so worth it, that you'd risk your freedom and your relationship with this girl?

Might Get Played

I would rather have an intelligent mind, because if you have a caring heart, you might get played or some shhh.
If you have an intelligent mind, you would be smart enough to get women, cars and money.

-Me

From The Beat: Is there any way you can have a caring heart and protect yourself from being played? Can you tell people you love "No!" when they get too demanding or possessive of you? If not, can you learn to? Loving someone doesn't mean you have to indulge their every whim. How do you intend to cultivate an intelligent mind? What else can an intelligent mind get you, which you value, besides women, cars and money?

Tomorrow Never Comes

What makes me mad is when people call me names and when people say things that are not true. What also makes me mad is my PO, because he says, "You get out tomorrow," but it never happens.

-Slop E

From The Beat: Why don't you ask your PO what's up with his promises? Tell him you really want to know what's going on. Is your release entirely up to him?



Telling!

I think it's all based on a person's integrity, but when it comes to snitching, you could get yo' self hurt. But if you tellin' to keep yo' gut clean then it's cool, but if you snitchin' just so you can get somebody else caught up, you's a hater period, point, blank.

So next time you think about snitchin' think about how you can get yo' self hurt!

-Diamond Princess

From The Beat: We're glad that you made the consequences of snitching clear. But the more we did workshops, the more we realized how many people share that same view. What we're wondering now is how come everybody knows a snitch, but nobody is a snitch themselves. How can this be possible? Can you explain how everybody knows a snitch, but nobody will confess to snitching?

Snitches

Personally, I hate people that be snitching. The people that be doing that kind of stuff are just hella dumb and scared. Those are the people that be two-faced and you can't trust those kind of people.

All my homeboys and homegirls aren't snitches and I ain't either.

-Melissa

From The Beat: So do you think there would be anything that would make you tell to save yourself? You know, kinda like you have children now and they need their mother and the case you are taking is a 25 with an L if you take the case. Now you decide. Ahhh... life, it's like a choose your own adventure book.

In A Situation

Telling, I think it's cool when you're put in a situation where you got prison for life because of someone else.

But I don't think it's cool when you get caught up and your patna in crime gets ghost! You sitting in jail facing time but he out free. You ready to snitch and get him or her caught up too. I think that's snitching.

-Angela

From The Beat: Thanks for putting a new perspective out there. Are there any circumstances that would make you take the prison time instead of that other person? Tell us more about your philosophy on the telling thing.

The Beat Within

I'm here today to bring to you a piece or a speech that I feel by the end you will see my point of view.

What is the worst thing you have experienced and what did you do to overcome it? Man, there have been a lot of experiences that weren't positive in my life from having been getting beat up by my twenty-eight year old cousin and I was the age of fourteen — sixteen years old.

I've experienced two types of drugs, which are weed (purple kush, light, etc.), cigarettes (Newport's, Kools, Camels, etc.), drinking alcohol (Remy, Vodka, Budweiser, Miller Light, Mickey's, all types of hard liquor)

There wasn't a day that went by that I wasn't intoxicated and like I never thought I would live my life like a dope fiend, stressing so much at the age of sixteen to try to maintain my addiction.

I would just continue to use and to be around the people who made my addiction worse, until I was put in a group home where my life was at a stand. Still I had nowhere to go, no one to help me out day after day, no guidance but the only thing I really thought that pleased me and really showed me life from behind the scenes without having to deal with the pressure of society was drugs.

The one way I found out how to overcome my experience was how to find out what made my experience so bad and when I pinpointed my actions, I knew what my limitations were and how not to past that line anymore.

-Helen

From The Beat: Good idea. Keep those aspirations and you won't go wrong. It's very easy to say you'll stay sober while incarcerated, but how will you deal with temptations when you get out? How would you react to an old friend handing you a blunt? How would you keep yourself from feeling out of place when everybody you know is doing drugs while you are staying clean? Enlighten us please...

Thoughts

Dis is my very last piece before I go home on May 6. But yeah I'm hella happy fa reals 'cause I worked foe my stuff dis time. I seen couple of my friends but it ain't gon' stop me from anythang 'cause I'm outta here and I'm gon' be aight 'cause I know I'll be...

Anyways, take care to everyone out there who's readin' dis and mad luv fosh, peace I'm gone....

Bye Beat see yah back at YTEC!

-Babygirl

From The Beat: What you have to do is start all over again. Turn a new page in the book of your life and don't look back. The hard part is figuring out how to do so. Do you know how you can move on with your life?

A Situation

Telling — Well only had one snitching situation happen to me.

When I was about eight years old I got my first whoopin' by my cousin for touching her pager. From then until the end of my life I would be honest or trust this woman who put her hands on me.

Even though she's not the guardian or my parent she continued to beat me. What came from this whoopin' was dishonesty, disloyalty to myself and my family, and very low self-esteem.

From then on out I started smokin' being that was one of the reasons I was getting whooped for. I started to deal because I was accused of stealing at home and getting beat for it.

It seems that as I got older the beatings started to extend and the addiction started to get worse. I decided to put my foot down. When I came home one day I was late, my cousin was on her way to look for me. When she seen me I walking down the street she got out of her car and started cussing me out.

When we got in the house she hit me in my jaw two times before I said enough is enough and hit her back. At the end I found that my nose was bust and my jaws felt dislocated.

I snitched and told the school nurse; that was the only way I felt was safe for me.

Sometimes by following your mind, it can be the best thing possible and I chose to put myself first every time for the rest of my life.

-Helen

From The Beat: You did what you felt you had to in this situation. Never think anything else. You do what's best for yourself first. Always remember that. Why do you think folks are so quick to put down tellin'? What advice would you give to someone who was facing a similar situation?

Lost Loved One

My worst experience was when I lost my grandfather on May 8th 2003. This year will be a year without him but the reason it was my worst experience is because I didn't get to say goodbye because I was getting high. I knew it was gonna happen 'cause he was hella sick. He had Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease also he had congestive heart failure.

It was hard for me 'cause my grandparents damn near raised me. He meant so much but it hurt so bad when he passed away and I didn't get to say goodbye. And as for now, how I'm overcoming it is by bettering myself. I'm doing what he's always wanted me to do. He never wanted me to follow my mom's footsteps but I was. That's the direction I was headed until I came to Walden House.

That's when the overcoming and change began. It's when I began to realize it's time to change. But about my grandpa, I know he's proud and he's watching me. But I will always be mad at myself because I didn't get to say goodbye but now I'm working on letting that go. He's not forgotten; I just don't dwell on it anymore and that's my experience.

-Jennifer

From The Beat: That is a very bad experience. We are glad that you are finding yourself in Walden House. It shows you can do what needs to be done in your life to be prosperous. Keep going girl, skies the limit. And remember, your grandfather only left you physically. His soul and spirit lives on within you. How can you keep his memory alive? And, what is the best memory that you share with your grandfather? Write on!!!

you have to
stay off the
street

Sometimes

Telling: I will not tell on nobody because sometimes it could get you killed and sometimes people will have a rumor about you and your name will be in the street. They'll call you all types of names but sometimes you have to tell who be killing people because you be the one know who did the shhh. If you don't they going to kill your butt, but sometimes you have to stay off the street or you will be dead or in jail.

-Lishea

From The Beat: If people didn't get killed for telling on each other, would you tell on people then or keep the same idea about telling as you do now?

It's Never Okay

Well, with me snitching is never okay. Well there are exceptions. For instance, if I know some dude goin' around rapin' little girls yeah I'm 'bout to run around tellin' all the police and everything but if I know one of my patnas shot somebody I ain't sayin' nuthin'.

So basically it's all about morals. I'm loyal to my patnas. I'm a have their backs to the fullest no matter what. It can be justified in certain situations. Them same examples I used in the beginning. If you snitchin' to get yourself outta something then you gonna get killed either way. But if you snitchin' to help a child or something then that's a justifiable reason.

-Reese

From The Beat: You are right — the reason you gave to tell is a good one. Not to some people though. What else do you think would be a good reason to tell? Why is rape less acceptable in our communities than murder?

I will always
be mad at
myself because
I didn't get to
say goodbye



The Things That Really Get Me

The things that really get me pissed are being locked up and being away from my home. Once you get into the system, it is hella hard to get out. The DA is always going to find a reason to lock you up.

The police, they're pretty messed up these days. Whenever you get questioned by the police, when they say things like, "Your friend said you did this and that and if you tell us what happened, we will let you go." But the next couple of days when you go to court, the DA will lock you up anyway. The police trick you like that.

-Jim
From The Beat: Ain't that the truth? It is encouraging to see young folks like yourself step up and speak the truth. Thanks for sharing some of your experience with us.

Life

Life is like a dice game: You don't know when you're going to crap out.

The system will play you if you don't get out and learn from your mistakes. Growing from wisdom is the key to success, I know.

-Mike
From The Beat: You've said it all here, Mike. Now you just have to put these words of wisdom in to practice.

**I thought I was ballin'
But my dreams were fallin'**

The Power Of Speech

Speech is by far the most inspiring, motivating, and all out powerful thing that a human can do. It is what separates us from the other animals on this planet.

To be able to move a crowd, incite a movement, lead people all with your words, that is powerful. MLK and X have been two people I have respected because they led African Americans to demand respect at a time when we were thought to be worthless. With their words, they made us move, they changed the laws and broke traditions of hate and separation. These two men made history and changed the world, all with their words.

-Spoken
From The Beat: True that, Malcom X and Martin Jr. had a tremendous influence on the world because of their ability to build the awareness of many people with their words. But speech alone is not what separates us from all the animals of the world. Animals have their own languages, birds have calls, dogs have barks, etc. That is their language, unfortunately, we do not understand it so we assume that our form of speech makes us distinct from the rest. On another note, what would you say to get people pumped up about changing the way things are now?

No Snitching

I ain't cool with snitching. I hate that shhhl! You drop the dimes, then you get dropped. That's just how it goes. You don't just get dropped; you dropped permanently.

Two of my boys here at Walden House got snitched on. Once they got to snitched on, they went straight to the Hall. They both got YA time over their heads right now because of that.

It seems that lots of people crack under interrogation, whether it's from the cops or rival gang members or whatever. The director of Walden House told one of the kids here: "You better drop the dimes or you ass is going back to the Hall," so what do you think he did? He dropped the dime on hella people, including myself.

I felt like yelling at him, but why mess my life up for someone that messed his own life up? I eventually learned more about respect and somewhat forgave him for what he did. Life's too precious to be fighting over the petty stuff.

-Who
From The Beat: We are glad to see that you did not jeopardize your own program by responding to what happened in a negative way. Especially since you're in a program where folks are encouraged to keep their colleagues clean. The most important thing seems to be to act in a way that makes you feel good about yourself and how you handle your business.

**Doing things I never did
in my life, having an open
mind, learning new things
and happy about it.**

This Is What Brings Me Down

What brought me down on the outs was all of these haters always hatin' on me. Ninjas envy me, I don't know why. It seems like every time I turn my back, a ninja had my name in their mouth. Trying to hate on me even more.

-Josh
From The Beat: We sympathize with you; haterism brings us down, too. But it doesn't bring us down too much, because then the haters would be reaching their haterish goals. What we are able to and unable to accomplish in life depends a lot on our attitude towards the struggles we face in pursuit of what we want. That means you have to face life with a positive and determined attitude or bad circumstances will dictate your entire life.

Snitches

I'm 17 years old, and ever since I was little, I hated snitches. It is like this: I was at the store and my homie stole some candy, and someone saw him and told on us and I got in trouble for my friend stealing. So every time someone's snitchin', it pisses me off.

But now that I look at it, if someone tells on someone for rape or something, I can see that's not snitchin'. If someone tells on someone to save their self, that is a snitch.

-Albert
From The Beat: Hey, it is what it is. It is sad to see that you were told on at such a young age. You learned a valuable lesson at a young age, what snitching can do to people, but it's important to make a distinction in some cases, as you mention.

My Experience

Some of my worst experiences
Was livin' in my own sickness
I reminisce

When people tell me to open my eyes
And see the light shinin'

But every time I open my eyes
All I see is darkness

No one put they hand out to help me out
So I went out and thought I was puttin' it down

My experience was sad
It wasn't my fault I was black

I was told to stay strap'
If they bust start bustin' back

I was trapped in a life of sin
Where I couldn't win

I had no friends
I thought I was ballin'

But my dreams were fallin'
Jesus was callin'

But I couldn't step in the light
My experience in this crazy life

-Merced
From The Beat: It still blows us away to see someone as young as you are able to flow with so much skill. We hope that you recognize the talents that you have and exercise them so that they become your strengths in life.

My Life

It was hard, I stated off living in Fillmore. I was just born. From 0 to 5 years old, I was still listening, not too much talking. 6 to 10 I just moved to Hunters Point. Now I'm starting to get in trouble at school. Talking stuff to teacher, not listening, really not participating. I was thinking I will never make it because I felt like school was kind of hard for me.

10 to 13 years old is when I first came across weed, really start getting peer pressure. Start learning about females, what do you do with them, what do you not do. I think I was taught wrong things. I was taught never to do anything for females and to treat them like nothing. Also, I just learned about drugs and what you do with them.

14 to 15 I start hanging out with older people doing things I do not have to do but do. Also, I started fighting and hanging out all night getting into it with people every day. Not learning anything but the street. Not listening to my family, thinking I am older than what I really am.

16, a lot of my friends really start dying. Friends start to get into it with each other. I started trying to get all my real friends together, trying to build loyalty and respect. I start thinking about leadership in a bad way, start thinking I can be the thing everybody was not. (That I can take charge and take over things by any means necessary).

17, trying to work on my problems, listen more to people that's trying to help. Doing things I never did in my life, having an open mind, learning new things and happy about it. Dealing with people I would never have dealt with in my life, not scared of talking to people, telling them how I feel. Thinking of other's feelings, not just talking about things, but really doing it and I feel good, but sometimes I have my problems but move on.

Going on 18, ready to change my life, tired of going in a circle. Deal with people I do not have to. Learning to deal with people that do not have any sense that I like to provoke. Learning to be a more caring person about things. And trying to get a job and hope to change my life. Also, I learned from my mistakes and hopefully I'll never go through it again, and if I do, I will know what to do.

-Richard
From The Beat: What a powerful and deep history, Richard. You have grown up fast and yet you recognize at still a young age how important it is for you to slow your lifestyle down before it slows you down for good. We have a lot of faith in you and believe that the next time you have to write a timeline of your life, it will speak less of tragedy and hardship and more of success and happiness. Imagine what that story would be like young homie and pursue the ends that are necessary to realize your goals.



Lots OF Things Bring Me Down

There are a lot of things that bring me down. One thing that brings me down is being locked up or in a facility.

Another thing that brings me down is doing the same exact thing every day, like in institutions.

The next thing that brings me down is snitches.

The last thing that brings me down is haters and the police, but all these things also make me angry. That is what brings me down.

-Bryant

From The Beat: There are two ways to feel about things that bring you down: let them bring you down and feel hopeless, or let that hate you describe to serve as a fire under you that makes you get up and do something about them. We hope you'll try the latter.

When Things Seem Unreachable

What gets me down is when I strive so hard for a goal and the goal seems unreachable. Sometimes I can't see past the present and I get sidetracked by little things. I usually give up.

Now I am still striving. My goal is to become a cartoonist and that is still my goal. It has been my goal since I was little.

My experiences have taught me to pick myself back up. When I skateboard, it is just like life. I might fall on my ass, scrape a layer of skin off, but I continue to try that trick until I make it. Peace

-Warhead

From The Beat: That is a good grasp of what self-determination is all about; you fall down, you pick yourself up. We have confidence that you can apply this to your life and find yourself not only free, but successful. By the way, what's with the name Warhead when you sign your piece, "Peace"?

Another thing that brings me down is when I see my family falling down slowly but surely.

Crossroads

In life there are the crossroads that can be smooth, easy, and positive. And then there is the rough road. The rough road is a road in which people go through bad experiences, lots of drama, and some family loss.

But for those who don't know, God is testing you and your beliefs. A question you must ask yourself is, where do you want to be in life? Only one person can answer that, and that is you.

Life isn't always about negativity. If you are one of those people without family or homies all I could say is I got love for you and keep your head up.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Sounds like you've found a way to make sense of your life and experience peace. Congratulations.

The Stuff That Brings Me Down

The type of stuff that will really bring me down is if my grandfather passes away, or if my soon-to-be wife leaves me for a dumb-ass reason. That will be something that will bring me down, but if it does happen, I really don't know what I am going to be doing, because it is always going to be on my mind for the rest of my life.

If it really happens to me, like my grandpa dies, but I still have my girl, I'm really not going to let it hit me that hard, just 'cause I lost one person, and I don't want to lose another person. That is the thing that will bring me down.

-Charlie

From The Beat: That would bring anyone down. Everyone will have to face the death of a loved one, but hopefully you'll have others around who will help you get through it. You are a good kid Charlie; stay focused.

The Last Letter

The time goes slowly by
At night I was so lonely
Between the autumn leaves
I said, "I want to leave."

After I wrote my last letter
Wishin' to you a good life
Inside me, bad weather
Tellin' you goodbye

Behind this smiley mask
I saw the ugly truth
A question in my mind I ask

Be happy forever
Now you've broke another heart
This is my last letter
And the end will start!

I wrote this poem when I broke up with my girlfriend, Heather. It was hard to let her go, but I am now getting over it.

Johnnie

From The Beat: Johnnie, you are the Don Juan of love letters and poetry. Seriously, we hope you've learned from this sad experience with love and the heartache. Here is some advice — let love find you when you are free.

I Need Some Help

I need some help
I came to this institution
Looking for a solution
I need this support
For when I go to court
If I mess up here
There goes another year
Down the drain
There's so much pain
That's building up inside of me
I just need some breath

-Standizzy

From The Beat: Some times we all just need to step back and catch a breath. Life is a struggle; nobody said it would be easy. It has been harder for you than for some, but the more determined you are to live it well, the stronger it will make you.

There Are Different Types

I think that there are different types of snitchin'. A snitch to me is someone who tells on the next man to either get himself out of trouble, or see the next man go down.

I personally hate snitches. I think that if someone does something and gets caught, they should reap the repercussions, and not snitch. If the aren't ready for the consequences, they shouldn't do what they do. I think that if it doesn't affect you personally, you shouldn't speak on it.

-Space

From The Beat: Good job expressing your opinion. If you found out someone was talking a rap for you, would you step up and take responsibility?

As A Kid

As a kid, I was growing up in a very dysfunctional family. As a young boy I watched my dad beat on my mom and me and my brothers. That is the worst thing I had to overcome. Shhh, I'm still working on it. That is some dramatic scenery to see and go through as a little kid. It gets a lot worst than that, believe that. And with that, I'm out.

-Mark

From The Beat: But you are a survivor, homie. We have folks here who have been dragged through the gutters of life and by their own willpower, they have made themselves into someone with a brighter future. You have that same survivor's spirit. Don't let what you have been through get you down, let it inspire you to realize how much easier it is from here on out.

I'm Really Excited

I'm really excited that my piece was in The Beat and I got some good feedback that made me feel good and encouraged me because I never got that.

The speech I would have to write about is how neglect and abuse from your parents screws you up. Every single guy I know that has been locked up had a messed up dysfunctional family. If you had good, loving, and caring parents and you're in this situation, then you obviously are trying to impress somebody. If you had screwed up parents, then your in the same shoes as everybody is, but you have to learn that it is better to talk about to them and forgive them instead of having hatred towards them.

Just about the snitching topic, to snitch on somebody to get out of the consequences, just tell them what you did and be a responsible man. Let whoever was with you take their part, and if they blame it all on you, then their wussies who aren't responsible and afraid.

And what brings me down is how I have two kids out there doing something and I'm not a part of their lives, and it makes me think that I'm a coward. I didn't like how my dad treated me, but yet I'm not a part of their lives because I'm in here. They're somewhere probably thinking I'm an ass, and that makes me ask for forgiveness every night and makes me cry and that brings me down.

-Paul

From The Beat: We feel for you and what you are enduring, Paul. You know that your forgiveness ain't gonna come just from prayers though, it is gonna come from you completing this program, getting out, and letting your actions determine the truth of your words. We have faith that you can do this. So until then, keep your head up and stay focused on the things that you need to do to get out and be successful.

What Brings Me Down

What's up with The Beat? My name is Nifae and I'm in Walden House. I'm here to change my life. Today I am going to talk about what brings me down. So here goes nothing.

I get brought down from a lot of things. One of them things would be when people victimize me. That brings me down to the point where I want to fight you or hurt whoever's talking 'bout me.

In Walden House, a contract brings me down. A contract is what we get if we do something wrong, like threats of violence, taking permission, meaning no stealing.

Another thing that brings me down is when I see my family falling down slowly but surely. That right their really brings up issues and brings me down. This is the main thing that brings me down. In a lot of ways, I be so down that I would break down and cry. I will feel so down that I wouldn't feel right for a minute.

That's it, thank you.

-Nifae

From The Beat: But hey, we always see you with a smile, so how do you deal with these things when they come up? You will get out soon, so we really hope that you are taking advantage of the opportunities that you have in Walden House so that you can make your life into what you want it to be.



La Coca-Cola Es Mi Favorita

La soda que más me gusta es la Coca-Cola, la que viene en botella de vidrio, porque te la tomas más sabroso. Bueno, me gusta en botella porque es más fuerte y me hace sentir una sensación en mi garganta cuando al tomo, bueno la tomaba porque ahora ya no la puedo tomar porque estoy encerrado. Pero cuando salga, pienso en tomar un chingo de coca de botella.

From The Beat: Que bien que te guste disfrutar de los sabores de la vida. Nos imaginamos que cuando salga lo primero que haras es tomarte una, verdad.

Coca-Cola Is My Favorite

The soda that I like the most is Coca-Cola, the one that comes in a glass bottle because it tastes the best. Well, I like the bottle form because it has a stronger taste and it gives me a sensation in my throat when I drink it. Well, better said, when I drank it because I can't be doing that now because I am locked up and I can't drink Coca-Cola, but when I get out, I plan on drinking a whole caseload of Coca-Cola in bottles.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

Siempre Estaras En Mi Mente

Hola mi cariño, quisiera decirte tantas cosas que quiero que sepas. Sólo llebamos unos cuantos meses juntos pero ya te tengo confianza en ti. Siempre te he tratado como si fuera mi esposa y como debes de ser tratada. Hago esto porque te quiero y porque siento mucho amor por ti. Aunque me dieron mucho tiempo, sé que no voy a poder olvidarte y siempre estaras presente en mi mente. Algún día volveré a estar contigo y recuerda que voy a hacer tiempo pero no por vida y muy pronto estaremos juntos otra vez y eso que nunca se te olvide. Algún día volveré a tus brazos y pronto estaremos juntos otra vez y nadie nos podrá separar.

Mi amor Chiquita, eres el amor más grande que tengo, nadie me importa solamente tú y siempre te voy a amar. Juntos para siempre, Serena.

From The Beat: Eso es el entusiasmo que uno tiene que tener para seguir adelante y par ver las cosas de una manera que ayude a cambiar a uno. ¿Dinos algo, tienes algún plan como mantener el amor de esa persona? ¿Cómo le hara para mantener a esa mujer contigo siempre? ¿Será Duro?

You'll Always Be In My Mind

Hello, my love, I want to tell you right now a lot of things that I would like for you to know. We have only been together for four months, but I already trust you. I have always treated you as if you were my wife, and I've treated you how you should be treated. I do this because I love you and because I feel a lot of love for you.

Even though I was given a lot of time to serve, I know that I will not be able to forget about you and you will always be present in my mind. Someday we will be reunited and remember that. Yes, I am going to be doing time, but not for life and very soon we will together again, and I know that I will never forget about you. Someday I will return to your arms and pretty soon we will be together again and no one will be able to separate us from each other.

Chiquita, my love, you are the biggest love that I have. I don't care about anyone but you and I'm always going to love you. Together forever, Serena.

-Angel B4, SF/YGC

Cuando Miro TV

Cuando miro TV, me acuerdo cuando estabamos allá afuera. Miro a los carro y se me imagino el mio, miro las calles de mi barrio y me pregunto, "¿cómo quisiera estar allá afuera!" Pero no puedo porque estoy aquí torcido sin poder comer lo que quiero, sin poder I a tirar crusin con mis homies.

La verdad es que ya no sé que hacer en esta juvenile, ya quiero salir de aquí.

From The Beat: ¿Verdad que te gustaria estar ahí? ¿Cuando mira la libertad, te dan muchas ganas de no haber hecho lo que hicistes, verdad? Portate bien para que goces de lo que te pertenece allá afuera.

When I Watch TV

When I watch TV, it makes me remember when I was on the outs. I see cars on TV and I start to think about mines and I start to visualize the streets of my 'hood and I say to myself, "oh, how I wish I could be outside!" But, I can't because I'm locked up in here without being able to eat whatever I want and I can't go out cruising with the homies.

The truth is I don't what to be inside of this Juvenile anymore. I'm fed up with this place and I want to leave now.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

Cuando Miro Atravez Mi Ventana

Cuando estoy en mi ventana pienso en salir y tirar parties con mis homies y estar con mi familia, mi jaina. También en tirar crisin con mis homies.

From The Beat: Creemos que esta bien que quieras ver a tu familia, pero a tus homies. ¿Que bueno te han traído ellos? Sabemos que los quieres y que son tus amigos, pero no te deberías de envolverar mucho con ellos, recuerda que los que pagan el precio son ustedes, los que estan presos.

When I Look Outside My Window

When I look outside my window, I think about getting out and throwing parties with the homies and being with my family, especially my girl. Also, I think about going cruising with the homies.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

Estar Chido O Tener Una Casa

Pues, yo prefieren la casa porque el carro se puede descomponer en unos años y la casa si la conservas bien, limpia y bonita, te durará mucho más que un carro.

Pero deberíamos de conformarnos con lo que Dios nos de y si Dios quiere que yo tenga una cosa o un carro bonito, pue slo voy a tener.

From The Beat: Muy buena opción, lo primer es lo que uno le pueda durar o lo mejor que uno le pueda dar a la familia o las persona que uno quiere. Dios quiera y te ayude en todas tus vueltas.

Being Fitted Or Owning A Home

Well, I prefer owning a home because a car can break down on you in a few years and a house, if maintained very well by keeping it clean and looking nice, will last way longer than a car.

But we should be happy with what God has given us and if God wants me to have a nice car or home, well, I'm going to have one.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

Para Los Niños

Yo quisiera decirles a los niños que no se pongan triste, que lo que paso son cosas que pasan, que le pidan a Dios que los ayuen a salir adelante con sus familiares aunque un gran ser querido se les haya ido.

También que les pidan a Dios por ellos y ellas.

From The Beat: Que bien, sabíamos que en este mundo hay personas que quieren lo mejor para todos. Estamos seguros que personas como tú alegrarian la vida de unas de esos niños. Gracias por tus palabras.

For The Kids

I would like to tell the kids not to get sad, and that what happened to them are things that just happen, and to ask God to help them come up with their family members, even though a dearly loved one may have already moved on.

They should also ask God to have mercy on them.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

Mi Historia

Me llamo Miguel, les voy a contar mi historia. Yo llegue a este lugar por no haberme puesto a pensr. Un día por la tarde estaba en una fiesta con todos mis amigos, pero me pasó una desgracia. Esa tarde me agarraron manejando borracho, y no me pude controlar. Tube que venir a este lugar. Les doy un consejo, no manejen borracho para que no caigan a este lugar.

From The Beat: Tubistes suerte que no te accidentastes o le quitastes la vida a nadie, muchas cosas hubieran pasado. Amigo, esperamos que los demás aprendan de loque te pasó a ti, y no lleguen a manerjar asi.

My Story

My name is Miguel and I'm going to tell you my story. I came to this place because I did not think about what I was doing. One day, it was in the afternoon, I was at a party with all my friends, and something very unfortunate happened to me. On that fateful afternoon, I got caught driving while under the influence of alcohol and I could not control myself, so I had to come to this place.

A word of advice: Don't drink and drive so you don't have to come to this place.

-Miguel, Santa Cruz

La Regué

Extraño a mi familia mucho más de lo que pensé. Pero ya la regué porque desde un comienzo debí haber mantenido mis cosas rectas.

Lo que hubiera hecho fue haber hecho las cosas que mi PO me dijo que hiciera, pero me valió madre.

From The Beat: Esperamos que después de esta experiencia empieces a tener todo recto, es lo mejor. Sabes cual es lo bueno, que te distes cuenta que la regastes, siempre manten esto en mente y veras que se te hara difícil regarla otra vez.

I Messed Things Up

I miss my family more than I thought I would, but I am the one who messed things up because I should have known from the beginning that I should have maintained my straight ways.

What I should have done were the things that my PO told me to do, but I didn't give a damn.

-Tomás, 150 Crew

The Beat Within/Without 9th Editor's Note Contest

Ed Note Contest
Volume 9.17
Page 57

*What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over,
and how would you go about doing it over?*

Our Favorite Pieces The 9th Editor's Note Writing Contest

What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?

OK readers, this week we are featuring (and re-running) The Beat editors' favorite pieces from our 9th Editor's Note Writing Contest. In issue 9.14 and 9.15 we ran all the entries for you to read and view, and as promised this powerful issue features the most popular pieces amongst the editors here in the office.

If you don't know by now, the following writers answered the following question ...

"What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?" Sure we expect the obvious replies, about not doing the crime that put you in the system, going to school, abiding to your family, probation/parole, gang life, the game etc., then again we expect many of you to step up big with details as you share a part of your life, and envision on paper a way of doing or reliving something over. Give us a scenario that will take us into your world. Show us the equation, the pros and cons, to the limited and numerous choices you can come up with, then, take us down a path of your choice and let's see what happens and where you go with it.

Before you dive into winning pieces, the cool part is that the top voters of this contest will receive prize money! Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders. We hope the money reaches these talented writers sooner than later. Congratulations writers and to all you writers who took a stab at the topic.

Hey, there's a new contest! Check out page 2.

1st Place Shawn Rogers Pelican Bay State Prison, Crescent City, Ca.

Rewinding The Hands of Time

Rewind back to San Quentin
Before I transferred to Pelican Bay.
Rewind back to County Jail, where the
Judge took my life away.
Rewind back to my trial, facing 25 to life
I took a chance.
Rewind back to me accepting responsibility
For my foolish actions with a warrior's stance
Rewind back to Juvenile Hall, a precocious kid
In a man's body.
Rewind back to that cold night I
Fired the heat on somebody.
On that night, picture my aggression
My desires, my fears — my gangsterism
Manifested, my essence is clear.
Rewind back to me being a follower
Instead of taking the position to lead.
Rewind back to my alcoholism, my head
Spins while my liver bleeds.
Rewind back to my inauguration
Joining a gang was my worst mistake, but my
Level of thugitry had to enhance —
Subconsciously I accommodated the hands of fate.
Rewind back to me putting my so-called
Friends before my family, not yet realizing
That family love is everlasting — love from
My friends comes sporadically.
Rewind back to my childhood years
Virgin eyes penetrated — I cried, but no
One listened. I guess my tears were underrated.
Rewind back to my birth who knew what my
Future would behold — now fast forward to reality
I reap what I sowed.

**Future
would behold
— now fast
forward
to reality
I reap what I
sowed.**

2nd Place Shakey Central California Women's Facility State Prison, Chowchilla, California

She would be here smiling and playing as thriving children do.

That Night

In all of the trials and tribulations in my life, save but one, I've dared to grow beyond the impact of choices and consequences born of my actions. One realizes that life is a maze of reality in living it. That reality brings about the ponderance of choice. In the solitude of choice, the mind succumbs to the arrest of thought. "Do or die" — the simplicity of the statement is paradoxical to the premise of ideologies upon which it rests, as well as the physical manifestation that comes to take shape upon execution.

In reflection, the ignorance of my youth and my myopic vision would not allow me to see a future beyond the implementation of my actions. At the time it seemed as if I swam the breadth, length, and depth of the river of poor judgment. Eventually, I found the depth of that river in the face of death . . . the death of my first-born child, my daughter, Kaliyah.

The art of healing has taught me that even in the silence of death of one, there is for another the voice of life for many. The Creator in all of His infinite wisdom gave all of humanity the freedom to choose and the power to create.

So attaching to the latter, and shaping and holding the former, I've dared to share my experiences for the first time with *The Beat Within*.

If I could relive the pivotal experiences in my life, it would be my first time giving life and having the obligation of the cold finality of death, because in these two experiences I had to say goodbye to the one true love of my life. Kaliyah died March 4, 1995 at four months old, and I was 19 years old at the time. Even at such a relatively young age in motherhood, I had committed myself to being the best mother that I could be.

One night when I put her to bed for the night, my life was forever changed. When I went in her room to kiss her once again good night, I found that my baby girl had secretly slipped away from me into another world of happiness, and I was alone in this world of sorrow and pain. I tried to revive her by performing CPR, but I soon discovered that it was too late.

So if I could relive that night, Kaliyah would still be here to enjoy the best of her youth and adulthood. She would be here smiling and playing as thriving children do. She would be asking the inquisitive questions that curious kids do. She would be here declaring to me and the rest of the world what career field she would making her stake in, in the future.

On the other end of the spectrum, my view as a mother would be enriched by watching my child grow up. I would've seen firsthand the tender moments of hugs and kisses, the Mother's Day cards made by her hands at arts and crafts time at school, the excitement in her eyes when she discovered new information, the proud look on her face at the satisfaction of her independent achievement and accomplishment. And the final piece of poetry wouldn't be in honor of the memory of her death and what it came to signify in my heart and mind, but instead serve as a testament of a celebration of the milestones of achievement in her life.

Dirge of Death

The laughter
The cries
The hugs
The kisses

The walks
The talks
The meals
I miss this.

Your first tooth
Your first steps
Your first words
What is it like?
Death. I've never heard.

Your first day of school
Your first graduation
What is it like?
Death took anticipation.

Your homework
Your school clothes
What is it like?
Death only knows.

"Don't make me late for work!"
"Mama, I got to iron my shirt."
What is it like?
Death. All I saw was dirt.

Money for school
Brand new toys
Watching out for lil' boys
Teaching you to sit with girlish poise
What is it like?
Death continues to roar.

The high school prom
"Oh, that's my song"
All night on the phone.
"Kaliyah, it's time to come home."
What is it like?
Death. I'll never know.

College
See you off in life.
Marriage.
Now you're a wife.
Motherhood.
You gave life.
What is it like?
Death cut those memories with a permanent knife.

What is it like?
Tears of death for the rest of my life.

3rd Place

D-Boy

State Prison Correctional Facility, Soledad, CA

I wish I had spent more time to get to know myself and recognize my talents early in the game.

One Mo 'Gain

What have I done in life that I wish I could do over? Damn that's a very good question. Can I choose more than one thing? That's a difficult question 'cause I done did so much in my life. Hmmm! Well ya'll asked for it, so here it is:

Starting from the very beginning . . . First of all, I will spend more time with my grandfather out in his quiet neighborhood rather than watching and soaking up game from my uncles who were as deep in the game as one can ever get. I would view the streets as what it was, rather than just be mesmerized by the good things. I would take heed to the commercials that said knowledge is the key, and listen to grown folks when they said, "If you don't change you gone be just like yo uncle."

Me and my little sister would be closer than what we are now; I would be an almost perfect big brother. I hate that I used to make her mad all the time, hitting her 'cause she couldn't fight back, for them reasons are the barrier in between us. 'Til this day, she won't really take my advice because she feels that I don't love her.

I'd have stuck to sports — baseball and football — and went on to be one of the greatest to play one of the two. I would talk my mother more and let her know how I felt unwanted and not be so arrogant. I would talk more with my whole family, expressing my feelings, pain, needs and everything else. I wouldn't expect to them automatically know what I felt inside. That way a solution could be worked out to prevent the life I now live.

Starting from the time I got into the game I would stack all my chedda. I'd embrace knowledge from all different angles. Being that nobody's perfect, I probably still would have had the knowledge and patience — I could have took it and used it to make my paypa grow, and not to mention retire from the same as BG, and before I slipped.

If I would have kept playing sports, the game would have been foreign to me. If I would have got closer to my granddaddy, a Vietnam veteran who believes in God and in hard "legal" work, rather than my "kingpin" uncles, I would have despised the game.

I should have paid more attention to those victims who lost their life due to those ferocious shootouts that left blood baths. From the day that my momma's boyfriend put his hands on me, I'd sit on my momma down and let her know how dude acted when she was gone. Instead of holding everything in, afraid that my feelings would be damaged, I'd only release them so people would understand me and the things I did.

My momma would be my best friend and my family would be one solid foundation. All the knowledge and wisdom they showered me with would go in one ear and put to use, instead of out the other one.

My Uncle L would be an example. I would learn from his mistakes rather than my own. I would see right through all the evilness and wicked, and choose my friends and surrounding more carefully. Instead of living before my time, I would play my position as a child and be grown when the time is appropriate. That would have stopped me from feeling so old at this young age.

I would've listened to my mother when she said, "How you carry yourself in public reflects on me." With that I would carry myself like an intelligent lil' boy with the utmost respect and manners my mother always demonstrated. Y'all still with me? That ain't even the half of it.

Another thing I'd have to take back is all those days I helped destroy the egos of all the so-called nerds, ugly, fat, etc. that I

picked on all through school. I'd even take back all the times I put gum in girls hair. I didn't know any better. In return I'd be their friends like I really wanted to do, not caring what others would say and think. I'd wear all those Payless Shoes I didn't like instead of hiding or throwing them away, unaware that that was money. I would not sneak into my mother's room to see the gifts before they were wrapped spoiling my surprise.

I wish I would've never found our family Bible that my momma hid her money in, I should have put 20 dollars in there instead of taking it.

If I could have "Eboni" back I'd treat her like the queen she is and not try to impress her with my bravery and macho-ness. She would be my wife right now with my kids. We would spend endless nights conversating and having fun like a solid family should. I would go out my way to protect her and make her happy even if my life had to be risked. We'd live in a custom-made mansion built from the ground away from all the madness. If this was back in time I would put her before my so-called friends without a second thought. I'd let a reality slap me and realize that a soulmate like that only comes once, but very rarely twice, in a lifetime . . .

My temper would be one of the things I would definitely have to reconsider. My temper is like the main reason for all my pain, sorrow, grief, and every other messed up thing I've been through. I'd learn to control my emotions instead of letting other people trigger them so easily. I would be brave enough to stand up to my peers, not letting them pressure me into doing all types of things I did just to earn stripes or be accepted, and if I didn't participate I would remind myself that that doesn't mean what they say about me is true. After all, they are only words. I would stop being childish and wouldn't let the word of mouth provoke me into doing something stupid.

(Beat: I apologize that all my regrets isn't in order by category, but there's too many of them — feel me?)

But anyway, I would have stayed in school, graduated, went to my prom, grad night, and just enjoyed the school atmosphere in general, making my mother proud of me. I would've kept my eyes on the big picture by thinking big and strategizing and plotting a plan to birth a multi-million dollar empire, instead of falling prey of the fast, short, filthy money, that lose-your-life money.

I wish I had spent more time to get to know myself and recognize my talents early in the game. I would let my mind expand like some elastic adjusting to different things, not just one. It would be no limits to my destiny. Other than turn my back on a "legit" life, I would accept all possibilities. I'd learn more about something before I got into it.

The one thing that should have been first is: I remember when I was five — maybe six — I was playing and I heard a man calling a name (not mines). So I went to the front of the apartment and seen something that I will never forget. I seen a man murdered in cold blood for the first time, but not the last. That really shook me up; it took a major toll on me as well as influenced me. I wish I had minded my own business. That particular incident stole a few of my marbles and loosened up some of my screws. I think it was because I was very close to the victim. I if could just choose one thing, just one it would be this.

That about wraps it up. The reason I haven't mentioned anything about my criminal history or current predicament is because if I had a chance to rewrite that first chapter of my life, anything after that would lead to the complete opposite of what it has turned out, as of today. Ya feel? Love you all! D-Boy, still real!

4th Place Young Bouncer High Desert State Prison, Susanville, CA

By gaining knowledge, we gain power and with power we will rise above these haters who work to keep us imprisoned. If we lay down, we'll stay down.

The And Pops

In life, as everybody knows, there are good times, and with those good times come bad ones as well. Sure, there are times that I sit in my box and think that if I would of done this different, maybe . . . but I know that if I go through this time that I'm doing with my mind frame focused on "maybe", then I'll be doing the "maybe" thing for years to come!

I've been wild since the days of a youth. I've been on this path for as long as I can remember. This is what I wanted to do. Now that I'm doing it, I have no shame at what I do. I'm not talking about prison when I say this, I'm talking about life in general.

I've focused my mind, body, and soul on becoming the man I am on the inside as well as on the outside. I'm in prison for being careless in my actions and in my decisions. Living life comes with living lessons as well, but if you do not realize your lessons while you're living them and improve your actions for the betterment of your life, then you're living life blind. With every day, I grow in my mind and learn lessons in life. I'm aware of my surroundings as well. I'm also aware of my self-improvement. Indeed, to be the best man that I can be starts with small steps and continues with small steps until the change and growth is complete!

Something that I would change in my past is my relationship I had with my pops before he passed away. Let's talk about big Billy Wolfington for a few minutes! Let's also talk about life growing up with his presence in our household.

My pops was a committed hustla to the game. His profession was slanging hop to the fiends in need of that fix to get through the day without running around like they got a deadly disease. I'm sure that I gained a lot of traits from him growing up, gained a lot of knowledge from paying attention to the ways he ran his game. The way you bag up the junk, one gram is worth \$100 — unless you're a savage at what you do and make twelve dime sacks out of that gram, which also came with a mouthful of game that's spit at the transaction!

Everybody has to eat one way or another, so I knock him for nothing and love him for everything. I was raised by my pops and my step-mom (RIP). As a kid, we never took trips anywhere, nor did we shop too much, but we did eat everyday and we stayed warm.

By the age of 8, I was out kickin' it with the homies and staying out late. Sometimes we'd be out all night pulling burglaries from time to time. At the age of 10, I was smoking weed and drinking with the homies just doing my own thing, not going to school, not doing too much in general, just enjoying life the way I knew how.

When I was twelve years old, my mom passed away and that's when things took a turn for the worse. Pops fell off his game at age 62, which in turn I grabbed the sack and got my grind on at thirteen.

If I could change one thing, I would have spent more time with my pops for the last few years of ol' boy's life instead of pulling G-rides all night and getting my bang on with the homies to the fullest. I would have spent some time to learn about, and get to know the past of my father that I know such little about. If I regret anything it's that right there. For some reason I knew that he was going to pass, or I had strong feeling that his time was running short. When I got caught up for GTA was the last time I spoke to him. I got my one phone call that was not collect and I called him. I told him that I would be gone for a few months and that I love him. I think I told him that I loved him a few times in that short conversation we had that day, and as fate would have it, he passed away two months later.

The thing that I wouldn't change is that last conversation me and him had that day, me on my way to a cell and him on his way to heaven. God works in ways that one may not be able to understand until the future comes.

Here we are, four years later, and I 'm at the age of 20 in a cell, him in heaven. The hands of time turn so fast and here I am sitting in a cell, in a different place, on a bigger yard, with staff that got bigger guns, in a taller tower, with smaller freedom! But with all that, I've learned while strugglin' through the system that I'll be a harder felon to bring back to this system!

Much love to all who maintain to strive through to break these chains! By gaining knowledge, we gain power and with power we will rise above these haters who work to keep us imprisoned. If we lay down, we'll stay down. If we fight back, we'll soon have our rights back!

Respectfully!

THE BEAT WITHOUT

The Beat Without

LA'SHAWNDA La'Shawnda, aka Bre-Bre, sent us these poems quite awhile ago, so long ago in fact that we're afraid she may not see this issue of *The Beat*. We wish her luck and wisdom on the outs, and hope she'll make it back to California from Texas. La'Shawnda writes from Giddings State School in Giddings, Texas.

I'm old enough now to live life my way.

Friends

Friends turn on you like it's a regular routine
They're your friends in yo' face, behind yo' back
you worlds of things
Some like to roll with ya to peep what you got
Some are secretive, tryna to get to yo'
connections
and spot.
In the game you can trust no one but yo'self
Messin' around with ninjas,
you'll have nothing left
So watch what you do and who you do it with
'Cause friends will be the main
one to flip on you quick!

I Miss Home

My home is Berkeley, California, born and raised
I miss it so much, I reminisce in a daze
My ma moved to Texas and to tell you the truth I hate it
I miss all my homies, but I know they out there
making it.
It ain't the same in Texas, I feel all alone
Can somebody feel me? 'Cause I miss home
As soon as I get free, I'm going back to CA
I'm old enough now to live life my way.
I will make the right choices and slow my pace
And live life to the fullest as if it was the last day.

ANGEL FELIX Although his aka is Sinful, we find nothing sinful in Angel Felix' latest contribution from California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi. In this well-reasoned and thoughtful piece, he spits some of the wisdom he's acquired since entering the system as a youngster. His message is deceptively simple: We can be sold anything, but until we read and understand the fine print, we really don't know what we're getting. Here, he spells out some of that "fine print."

Don't Buy Without Reading The Small Print

Saludos! As always, allow me to extend my respect and solidarity. I received an issue of *The Beat* yesterday, and felt like droppin' a few lines. I read the articles in the back first, always, and I respect all who are willing to paint a picture of reality within the prison.

Prison is a separate society within. There are things you cannot explain. Some things are better left under wraps. But what should be explained and emphasized is the direct message that is being endeavored to pass on to the youth, the hardships of what this lifestyle brings, the small print of "thug living."

And what is the small print, you're probably wondering. Well, before I elaborate on the small print, I will touch up on the sales pitch we have caught, the idea of fast living.

We never stopped to think about what the results of our actions would be. We overlooked the small print. We were/are fascinated by this fast living, easy money, the action, excitement, women, drugs, parties, clubs, money and muscle, respect.

As we know, most of us come up in poverty and are exposed to this lifestyle, so concepts and thug idealism is embedded into us from a young age. As we enter our teens we know what is morally right, but we choose to wear a certain color, and who we roil with if not gangbangers claiming a block/turf. So, therefore, if we know what's right, we also know what's wrong.

Now, as we grow up and make the choices we make, we are influenced by our peers — how they act, speak, what they wear, drive. All these aspects contribute to our self-identity and shake our attitudes and outlook on life, and our way of life becomes acceptable amongst ourselves.

Now what is that I mean when I say the "fine print" of thug living? The things not told to you about this way of life. For some there are positive role models, but for others

their role models are caught up in traffic and thugged out. So the hardships you can avoid and be laced up on are not introduced to you. All the light is shined on the advantages of what is to be gained, but the small print is all the hardships we face.

Now, not everyone is strong minded enough to endure this lifestyle when times get hard, when the police catch you up, put you under the spotlight; when enemies bring it to you, when you have to make certain choices that can cost you your freedom. What's not told to ya is the price of thug living.

We are all street educated, so street knowledge is all we know. Que no? So how do we understand something such as the small print? We have to be enlightened or learn the hard way, and once we do understand we are in prison or CYA most times, and it's too late.

But there are the few who will peep game and analyze what is being said, the stories and advice given, the warnings. I don't write to preach about what you should do with your life. I'm an example of where thug living ultimately gets ya, and I was misguided myself, caught up in traffic.

But since I've been in the system, I've been fortunate to be embraced by positive influences, gente who aided me in overcoming negative aspects about my attitude, my outlook on life. They push me to better educate myself, open my eyes, and uphold a strong and positive attitude. There will be many bumps in the road, but any one of the younger generation can redirect their lives.

The small print is me and every other convict housed in California prisons, those deceased, injured and disabled, all the families torn apart due to drugs, gangs, all the tragedies and misfortunes that ya have faced due to your choices — and what lies ahead if you pursue this lifestyle.

Gracias for your time. I will wrap this up. This is just food for thought. You do the dishes.

In struggle, siempre.

PROVERBS The powerful Proverbs returns to the pages of The Beat Without, dropping a handful of poems below. His poems are meditations on life, guidance and beauty, and his lines weave together thoughts and feelings both abstract and pointedly clear. Proverbs comes to us from the Dewitt-Nelson of CYA, and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

crimson of fiery orange like coloring a rainbow and the soul learns to spell colors

To You I'm Going

Pacing with their original self
step by step carefully taken
dancing with no fear
but instead dancing to the music
let it take you to the ultimate note
with joy and become bliss
Beautiful shades of the music
I can't see but I feel it
I live it to the core of my being
it gives white gigantic wings
I fly without ends to my destiny
I see my name
written in golden letters
but what's beautiful and precious isn't it
but your name next to it
blinded by its radiance, almost
not visible to my eyes
but I catch it with their grip
and only what's good
I will not let it go
Walking with my original self
side by side
I forget my personal history
and start again into another race
to win your heart, to be your man

My Candle

I hold my candle in front of me
to light my eyes so I can see
the candle's light is sometimes weak
but I hold to it anyways because I'm strong and meek
up against it stands
against millions of stars

I hold my candle in front of me
it shines every night just for me
the stars up above are everybody's
but my candle's light is just for me
so I'm happy that I can see

I hold my candle in front of me
fighting, defying death just for me
so vividly in my mind do I portray
every flower, every tree
the light of my candle lets me see
it burns, it burns without stop
from when there was nothing
now there is a risen hope

I hold my candle in front of me
so weak it seems, but so strong it is
once I was blind with useless eyes
now my candle gives me hope
I can see, be happy, and know there won't be more cries.

Alone

Out of my ocean sights
cover the velvet curtain of silent nights
rise from the pit, rise up that he is sad
of the millions of wonders of God
as the sun once more
drowns itself in its mystifying depths
of the long dark, with sparks of candles hall
along my ocean's edge
I hold myself captive

Out of my ocean sights
the sunrise, and the ocean
sheds just one more tear
and see it as it has always been
a beautiful sight, even during the mystifying night
feeling its way
slowly taking my last breath, and yet my first

Out of my ocean sights
I see the moon, for she is also lonely
my eyes wonder as I see
how long will it be
for my precious moon to be free
of the cold walls of the clouds in the sky
at night they are the stars' shelter
and my ocean sight
tells me something
"I'm tired," I whisper
"It's okay," my ocean says, "I'll be your shelter"

Colors

Beautiful shades
crimson of fiery orange
like coloring a rainbow
and the soul learns to spell colors
blue and red
why do you influence bad things?
it doesn't matter
colors still colors, beautiful still beautiful

I learn to mix you all together
coloring between the lines
between roses and carnations
sunflowers and tulips
dandelions realizing their hidden beauty

My art is abstract
to what your beauty really is
colors in vertical lines
horizontal waves like an ocean
of another realm of lilies

Beautiful shades of colors
running without rest through the sky
hiding themselves in the clouds
of the large blue sky
colors, how brilliant
in the rainbow bow

AA BACOS AA Bacos, second-place winner of our last editor's note contest has written two more mind-bending, mind-blowing poems. What do they mean? You tell us. As always, we're happy to have his words in *The Beat Without* and look forward to seeing what he will construct for us in the future. Antonious still writes us from Beeville, TX.

Reconstruir

Disassembly
cleaning mutant jumbo shrimp
valuating eviscerata
butchers and economists
stockbrokers
gourmands of black market cuisine
the ectoplasm of an endangered species
undulating off my plate

Disassembly
unbraiding neural chords
severing
the kite string umbilicus
My Being is a squadron of kites
sharing a common twine
tethered across
multiple realities
abysses

My Being (is)
360-degree smile
that decapitates itself
an Elizabethan ruff
made of scalpels, bent guillotine blades

We write our own birth notices
on leather parchment sheared
from the shadows of our corpses

A squadron of kites
suspended by the winds of mighty orgasms

by a fear of comatose embers
by the invisible vertebrae of cashmere
scarecrows

Cancerous mutation
an epiphany foresworn at the Summit
of extraterrestrial superpowers
their smoking ambassadors
whose cigarette ashes are overgrown
like fingernails on radioactive cadavers

Box kites
Hypercube kites
Taliban recruitment propaganda kites
flying burkhas dancing on their own
volition
My skins
Tzkatlipoka's tutu
I pirouette
'round the axis of my immobile spine
trapezoidal merry-go-round
my flesh suits
squadron of hypercube box kites
extended
(a broken rosary of kites)
sustained by the gales
of my permanent last exhalation
bellows breathing enlivening
complicating
this entanglement of my nerve chords
Gordian knots I slice
360 frown

become metastatic tumor
indecisively malignant in its benign-ness
allied with the tapeworm god
become the intestine disciple
new string for kites
elastic fiber optic cables
for third rail kite catheter
disemboweled accordions wailing
like sorcerer widows, recipients of
untouchable karma
disemboweled accordions mourning
our disjunctivity
our ellipsis in telepathy
like the court astrologer ballerina
I curtsy

To the Queen of Infinite Space
the involuted projecting skirt of my tutu
gutting me as I curtsy
my entrails curtsy to my crushed pelvis
We all curtsy
like exaggerated mannequins
(warped by being too close to the radiator)
disfigured
extended beyond our ability to conceive
disjointed
(a phallic mockery; the impotence of Aztec
sacrificial clowns)
like a rubber obelisk
commemorating oblivion itself
commemorating
our doomed flight to he Unknown

Machete Logos: A Rap

I've never been a medium, only the source
that's gonna flood your river, change its course
I'm the melting glacier original flow
the fire to end an ice age with Shankara glow
My obsidian machete tongue is licking the sea
of liquid flint, shootin' sparks of our intimacy
I will unite and divide you, steal from and provide for you
Humble and exalt, pleasure and torture,
Bind and liberate, imprison, exonerate

(Chorus)
Don't say I didn't warn you, so approach with caution
Approach bearing tribute to the Anawak Pharaoh.

The Penitentiary's just a stupid masquerade ball
hurt little boys with Wyatt Earp masks that's all
At times I ran the game of a "yessir" servant
but underneath the dove's mask lurks the wisest serpent
You thought I was a pawn, thought I was a madman
but I'm the Queen powered King with the master plan
'Cause he who laughs last lasts, endures to the end
post-omega, mega gryphon, siempre grifs, sensei of the Bong Show
Gonna show you how Aztlan's centaurs save the planet
trample the monarchs that once ran it
But you're too slow for my game, I'm movin' so fast
I'm already behind you.
You're too dumb to pronounce my name
your fearful stupidity is the rope that binds you.
I'm the Caesar, gladiator of mind in this labyrinth coliseum
I'm the Smoking Mirror Priest maligned in your thought-crime museum
I steal from the wealthy, give to the mighty
'cause he-who-has gets, there is no satiety
So join me for my feast; numerous tables for the Beast
This is no funeral dinner; only perpetuation for the sinner
'Cause death is for the dogs, but life is for the hounds of hell
Forever I live, 'cause only the good die young — No rest for me.

(Chorus)
Don't say I didn't warn you, so approach with caution

Approach bearing tribute to the Anawak Kingdom.

I made a Voodoo doll of your God, I'm the one he must obey
I gleefully scattered his body parts from the river to the bay
So gather your inner strength, it's useless to pray
I'm the blue bus chauffer bulldozing the way
If by force I must take, then so be it
but beware if my subtlety, I know you can't see it
Though my words be blunt, you cannot fathom my silence
it's my weapon for the hunt, so much more effective than violence
So save your peashooters and dynamite, go store 'em as some relics
in the museum and I might share the hallowed secrets of my serpentine DNA
double helix
I'm Djhoty's ninja Djinn, genetic engineer engineering the enginery of my
genus genius
Goddamn! I know I've already lost you; I'm the draftsman of this maze
I'm MC Escher's Plumed Ourobouros swallowing my ways
I'm a self-created bornless star — you're scorched by my rays
You marvel at my crown for it's identical to Re's
I made a voodoo doll of your god, now you must obey
So to earn my respect as a God to yourself you must pray

(Chorus)

I made a voodoo doll of your God — heads up, this is a different verse
I made a voodoo god of your doll — Ken Azteka and Barbie —
Lo the first dominatrix of this Universe — Hello Kitty Bast —
I'm the GI Joe of this multiverse, so far into the future I rewrote your past.
From your gods I make dolls — I'll never grow old
from your dolls I make gods — from your hair I spin gold
Sewing my teeth in the ground, I harvest black diamonds
transmutating the sounds, I lick away
cherry picker, liquid flint lick, like Huwawa I smile
spittin' forth my machete logos — my grail of wisdom undefiled
pay heed to how this flow goes — at your funeral I smile
spittin' forth my machete logos — my grail of wisdom undefiled
I've never been a medium, only the source that's gonna flood this river,
change its course
I've never been a medium, only the force that's gonna flood your river, change
your course, of course.

THE POETIC PRISONER

Once again The Poetic Prisoner picked up a pen and is setting the pages of The Beat Within ablaze. In his first poem he releases the passionate inferno that bleeds from his heart. If you don't already know, The Poetic Prisoner is fighting to shut The California Youth Authority down by speaking at numerous events across The Bay Area. He read this poem at one of these events and amazed everybody. So as you read the first poem imagine a Beat writer expressing himself in front of four hundred and fifty people while asking what will it take to shut YA down. A child dreams of becoming many things: a fireman, a teacher, a ballet dancer, or President of the United States. In his second poem, the Poetic Prisoner, our colleague, casts his mind back to that innocent time when he dreamed of becoming a basketball star, a jazz musician, a teacher, a poet — and tries to make us understand how that child's dreams get crushed under the label "juvenile delinquent." And in his last poem he elegantly lets his heart speak to his wife — our fellow Beat colleague Arlene. We are so happy for them, and hope you'll be just as happy for The Poetic Prisoner when you read these documented flames of passion and love.

What Will It Take?

Today we're commemorating two beautiful souls
That will never be forgotten.
Two souls that were told to grow and remain whole
In a place that's rotten.
These two young lives are just as important
As the San Francisco police officer who died.
Our families' tears are just as real
As the tears the SFPOA have cried.
Shhh! They should be on our side,
We're also pushing for an execution, but of YA institutions.
We're tired of having to clean up our communities
Because of the Youth Authority's pollution.
Their corruption is not an illusion,
We saw youth counselors beating kids on tape.
Yet and still our great country refused to prosecute them,
Or even give them a slap on the wrist, so what will it take?
You have outrageous reports about cages
Endless pages of a failed system.
The faults of these institutions are endless,
It would take a lifetime to list them.
You've heard horror stories from people who've been there,
And the grief families experience.
We've made you curious by being furious about how
delirious
California is for acting as if the lives of children aren't
serious.
You've got money to lock us up,
But our colleges are receiving constant budget cuts.
They refuse to teach us and when we act ignorant,
They discard us like old cigarette butts.
Why don't they use all the money they make to
rehabilitate?
The YA programs are fake and we should set them straight.
Not by giving them one more opportunity to procrastinate,
But by refusing to wait while asking what will it take.
How many kids have to pass away?

Why should we pay people to beat children?
Is it fair not to care
While disregarding our future's feelings?
Lots of men lose oxygen
Because of the excessive use of mace.
We watched the videotape with disgrace
When did we start to tolerate the brutal mistake
Of letting youth counselors hit a kid 28 times in the face?
We need to be embraced
Just like anyone else,
So if you really want us to change meet us halfway
By giving us a little help.
It's not right to sacrifice our health for your wealth,
So stop looking out for only yourself.
YA is quick to point the finger,
And make youth suffer for their mistakes.
But now the tables are turned and more of us are
concerned,
We know YA will never learn, so what will it take?
A system that's based on interacting with hate,
The first thing they do is put you in a gang.
Two kids with great potential were hanged,
And all we're asking for is some sort of change.
We can let them resort to expert reports,
And they still couldn't give us any reason to exist.
Do you think being a five-digit number
Was our childhood wish?
There are too many young lives at stake
To ignore a ninety percent recidivism rate.
The young people have no faith
In YA's ability to rehabilitate.
So as we commemorate the unfortunate fate
Of the youth that are still suffering in that brutal place
Ask yourselves if it's right to let lives go to waste,
Or to not give two predators caught on tape a case.
Then join me in asking the state,
What the hell will it take?

My Childhood Dream

When I was younger I dreamt
To be a great success.
I wanted to do my best,
And prove I was better than the rest.
I envisioned being a basketball player
While wearing jerseys and showcasing my skills.
I wanted to publish a book of poetry
And get paid for expressing the way I feel.
I learned to play the trumpet at eight,
I saw a future as a jazz musician.
I had a gift in public speaking
Because I really wanted people to listen.
As time went on my dreams turned to nightmares,
So the idea of me being successful
became harder to reach.
I couldn't stay in class as a student
Because I only had the desire to teach.
So I dropped out, did drugs,
And ran away from home.
My family drove me crazy
They couldn't understand my need to be alone.
With every feeling of inadequacy

I took a hit of weed.
But my craving for a high got more consistent,
And eventually it became a need.
So I started doing evil deeds
To support my habit.
The thought of numbing myself from emotion
Was too pleasing, so I had to have it.
Eventually I took it too far,
And landed myself in YGC.
I was just a child,
So I was kind of hoping they would set me free.
My public defender told me
If I pled guilty I would be sent to Glen Mills.
But when I did I found out
I was being sold a dream that wasn't real.
They moved me to YA in '97,
And I'm still under their jurisdiction seven years later.
I didn't want this life,
I really only wanted something greater.
I envisioned being a poet, public speaker, jazz musician,
Teacher, and a member of any NBA team.
But being a juvenile delinquent
Was never my childhood dream.

THE POETIC PRISONER (CONT.)

If My Heart Could Speak...

As my fingers dance with computer keys,
I realize the thoughts that flow through my mind.
However I'm tired of mental images,
So I'm going to listen to my heart this time.
If it could speak, it would tell you
How special you are.
It would do whatever it could
To see your eyes twinkle like stars.
If my heart could speak,
It would say I love you forever.
It would explain how meeting you
Made everything in my life better.
My heart wants you to know
That you are beautiful in every way.
So you don't have to worry about me cheating
I'll pick you over any girl on any day.
Our bond is too tight,
Our souls are one and they shine too bright.
You've made me want to do right,
So I promise to show you heaven tonight.
Your wish is my command,
I couldn't imagine you with another man.
For when nobody else understands,
You comfort me with the slightest touch of your hand.
My plan is to be everything you need,
The band-aid to your soul when it bleeds.
I'll give myself to you until you've satisfied your greed,

And I won't be like them suckas who have a baby
and leave
For I wouldn't be a man if I couldn't take care of my seed.
If my heart could speak,
It would remind you that you're my dream come true.
There's nothing I wouldn't do
To make this the best love you ever knew
The best life you've lived through
Should be a life with me.
For they could lock my body up for an eternity
But they can't stop my heart from feeling free.
No matter how bottles they tell me to pee in
You're the only woman I'd ever believe in.
So you don't have to trip off of me receivin'
Gifts from another woman because baby I'm never leavin'.
I only want you next to me,
You are the best for me.
Nobody gets the rest of me
For I need to be close to my lover — it isn't just sex to me.
It's the magnificence of growing old
With the person who controls your soul
While listening to each story told,
And having someone that's perfect for you to hold.
All I want is to have you in my arms
While I'm in a deep sleep.
That's what my heart would say
If only it could speak.

-The Poetic Prisoner

I won't be like them suckas who have a baby and leave

TAALIB SANKOFA Taalib Sankofa graces the pages of *The Beat Without* with another selection of his hard-hitting poetry and prose. Taalib pulls no punches, and we're glad he doesn't. He takes on the issues of being biracial and drug dealing, as pays tribute to the revolutionary Marilyn Buck. Taalib writes us from the State Prison Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, CA.

What Is The Solution To The Cocaine Epidemic In Our Communities?

Well, we have to eliminate the mindset of the dope dealer. The mentality of the dealer in the neighborhood places the LOVE OF MONEY before love of his community.

In this global cocaine traffic that is going on, the first thing we have to understand is that Mack D who is running the dope spot on Wherever Street is not importing tons of pure cocaine directly to the street. Cocaine traffic is a billion-dollar industry, and there are behind-the-scenes payoffs to corrupt politicians and federal agents who look the other way as shipments are dropped off in the swamps of Florida (this is not talked about). Even Col. Oliver North, a high-ranking US military officer, was suspected of using cocaine money to fund the war against the Sandinistas.

The role the federal government has played in importing poison into the community has been a lingering question and is one that has not been proven. The major players, the ones moving tons not kilos, rarely surface above the radar.

Mack D on Whatever Street is a problem in the African community. His motivation has been fueled by the profit motive, and he equates his selling D with a legitimate form of work i.e., a viable means to support his babies and one or more women. He wants the very best for his loved ones, food on the table, expensive Jordans and chariots with rims of gold. At the same time, Mack D does not want his daughter

on crack, selling her body for a piece the size of a marble. The ends, however, justify the means, regardless of who gets hurt. No victims in the dealers' eyes, only customers who take the same risk he does when they transact business.

The fallacy to this line of reasoning is that the law of averages will eventually snare both the dealer and user. The longer one participates in the "so-called" game, the greater the chance of getting burned, as in getting outright killed, becoming addicted or receiving a lengthy prison sentence. Under federal law, the laws for "rocked up cocaine" or crack are harsher than the ones for powder cocaine! So if you are supplying "yuppies" in Bel Air, rest easy, know your cohorts in Watts pushing "cakes" of "rocked up" cocaine will receive more time.

In spite of this double standard that is directed at the dealer on the poverty line, he is without excuse. Cocaine is a highly addictive substance that has destroyed the lives of millions!

We cannot rightfully call dealers (or structures that support them) Afrikan, because by their very nature these actions are destructive and anti-Afrikan. Selling poison is to disrespect your ancestry. Yes, the task is up to us to clean our communities, and even the criminal justice system has failed us and operates under a double standard — one set for the dominant culture, and another for just us. Yes, we should be involved in citizens' patrols in the streets so children can walk to school without being solicited by the poison dealers. A visible presence sends a message, a peoples' presence, not a state police presence.

TAALIB SANKOFA (CONT.)

Mulatto

The double blind
mulatto, octoroon, zebra, half-breed
half of what?
son of the devil? son of man? no less than human the way Allah planned it
"just a house negro, I suppose" says young willie
all the way back to two thousand and two census
biracial, pick your choice, still a niggah when you get to the county jail
is it all just charade? bourgeois, what's it all about in America?
upper-middle class, no time for the flatlands and them people . . .
no class, middle class, underclass
who is the underclass and how did they get there? hmmm
one color complex, not black enough, not white enough to be you know,
you know, fully accepted . . .
oh, you have such good hair, nappy of course is bad, bad!
We love you mariah, don't ever lose your soul, pound for pound
it's worth more than all the platinum in the world!
light, bright, smile for the camera, maybe we should all dye our heads blond
to be more marketable . . . ahh take three . . . ahh take five!
proud to be of afrikan descent, it's in my blood, as in DNA from the Nile
no longer in denial
afrikan is culture conscious state of mind —
mulatto only if you choose to be . . .
by the way, who named you that and why did you wear that label?
did you buy it at the gap?
roots of racism run deep, a social disease based on perception
did not know you was a neg-ra
sorry ma'am we have to cancel your gold card
no culture allowed

**Strategy of
non-violence
is not
silence!
Where will
you be when
revolution
comes?**

Ode To Sista Marilyn Buck

11:55 pm

Revolutionary Black Party

Come back, come back, come back third force
calling out to the underground all beautiful people
of the movement forward, moving mountains
roll call Sista Assata for a generation unborn so brilliant
so black, so luminous reflecting light
upholding the torches of struggle in the longest night
running a triathlon relaying the baton to set forth
a blazing desire for change
dawn of the birth of foot soldiers thirsty for liberation
there is a river in this hour of decision! Keep watch Black!
There is a situation going on — take heed to the signs
plant seeds in the Bustani of bloodshed in the streets of
Cincinnati
and every village
Oh Yaweh, take this cup from your servant
servants of the people mandate from the Most High
freeing the land from the drought of oppression
dry timber about to be lit
as visions of uprising flow through collective membrane
shalom and salaam
freedom and justice, no freedom and no justice!
Cries the worker! Equality and a living wage for the elderly,
woman, man and child
— what we want? Reparations
this is for the love of our people my sista, my brother
sound all alarms pose real problems
for the merchants of misery, the World Trade Organization
mothers, doctors, students, teachers, rebels unite!
Chant remembrance of the Source
chanting in the morning and at night
chant umoja chant justice chant love chant healing
chant self determination
chanting in solidarity for fallen Panthers

like a pride slaughtered in the asphalt
justified homicide by the fascist
fratricide by the trigger of the homey
people have you had
enough?

Strategy of non-violence is not silence!

Where will you be when revolution comes?

Uhuru sasa is Kiswahili for illumination the mind!
Ministers of information ciphering symbols of time
streams of consciousness flooding the airwaves with
images of

Bantu children celebrating the elimination of dope in the
community

reciting breakfast rhymes honoring the first fruits of the
harvest

uncuffing the shackles of mentally dead guerillas
cheap thrills mean nothing when revolution comes!
In the horizon rising blow winds of change through the
four corners

of the globe sending waves of conscious leader
flying the banner of oneness
opening banks of knowledge
establishing healing centers
education free and sun energy
rewriting the ten point program building pyramids
networking
holistic ways of living in harmony with the planet
standing united against the war
as the bombs for Baghdad reign drops
depleted uranium on innocent Muslims and babies!
Damn! Surely this not the Blackman's fight
servicemen and wome-ameri-I-can, we stand against
wickedness in high places
— object with a conscience!
Stop the genocide ride of the pale rider
for oil drills mean nothing when revolution comes!

THE BEAT WITHOUT

The Beat Without

OLD TOWN MARYLAND

A group of guys — David, Justin, VJ, Ryan, and JW — write to us from their lockdown facility back east in Old Town, Maryland. Justin was once in Santa Clara Juvenile Hall and informed everyone at the facility about The Beat Within and they all got together and wrote a bunch of poems and sent them to us. We look forward to hearing more. We are pleased to see young people getting together and doing something positive and productive with their time.

What's True?

What's true?
When ninja get high
They do stupid shhh
Hurting people all the time
Just for some kicks
That's true.
Put a ninja in their shoes
And then put them down
He'll feel bad just like
Anyone who gets clowned

What's true?
Ninjas roll ten deep
And wanna ride or die
Put a ninja alone
And that ninja will cry
That's true.
They shouldn't try to
Act like someone they're not
Doing shhh like that is
Just gonna get them shot

What's true?
A ninja who doesn't care
Doesn't like himself
Acting like a bigger man
All because he got the wealth
That's true.

If only he was poor
Then he'll see the light
It's not everyone around him
It's just his own damn life

What's true?
Only one thing matters
If a ninja's selfish as shhh
Getting what he wants
Even if he has to snitch
That's true.
When he get caught
He be the first one to shoot
He should be the first ninja
To get the boot

What's true?
Greedy ninjas have no
Care in the world
Put a lot of shhh over
His family and girl
That's true.
If a ninja doesn't care for it
He don't deserve to have
'Cause all he's doing is hurting people
And leaving them sad

What's true?
Ninjas have a hard time
Getting what they need

Not thinking about their fam'
Just thinking about weed
That's true.
They wonder what to
Do in this world
Got a baby momma at home
And go screw another girl

What's true?
Ninja have a hard time
Finding a job
They just sit on their ass
Living off of their moms
That's true.
Ninjas just too
Lazy and shhh
Depending on everyone else
You ain't hard, you ain't shhh

What's true?
When everyone around you
Is doing good
All you wanna do is rob
And steal from their 'hood
That's true.
If they just try and do something for
their life
I wouldn't be writing this shhh
And everything will be alright

-David

Ninjas have a hard time Getting what they need Not thinking about their fam'

Hard Times

Sitting in my room
Just chillin' with my girl
Not giving a what
About anything in the world
Reach for my forty
Tip it straight to my head
Peace to my cousin
For he is now dead
Hard times is here
I don't know what to do
But go buy a bag
And a blunt or two
Not really knowing
That I'm messing up my life
But I don't really care
Just go grab the knife
Split it, roll it, and
Take it to the dome
This is my life
When I'm sitting at home
Calling up my boys
Asking them what's up
Hopping in the car

Planning not to get cuffed
My family is poor
And got nothing to eat
All I can do now
Is sit back in my seat
And stay still praying
That I won't get caught
And get money for my fam'
As so I thought
I wound up taking
More than I need
Not thinking about my fam'
Just thinking about weed
That's the only thing
That threw me off
Walking around the room
And the alarm went off
Cops came rolling
I say about ten deep
The scared ninja that I was
I managed to creep
Grab my shhh and my cash
And on my way home
Went to the door
All I saw was a chrome

The O's laid me down
Like it was their job
Having no clue
That I had just robbed
The judge told me "Son
You're facing 2 to 3 years"
And they had a fingerprint
But it was smeared
Now it's time for the jury
To give me my sentence
But all they could do
Is explain my innocence
I stepped off the stand
With the shackles and all
Went to my lawyer
And he took them off
My family got money
And food to eat now
And I'm sitting here
Thinking why and how
I got away with that shhh
But with a mastermind
Now y'all ninjas know
How I spend my hard times.

-David

Changes

Too many things are changin'
Feelin' that my time here is wastin'
Got a little sis that I miss fo' real
Seen her four times
Then was sent out here
Got some pictures in the mail
'Bout a week ago
Thinkin' 'bout responsibilities
As a big bro
It's the hardest thing
In the world fo' me
A little girl at home
That I can't see
It's all my fault
I know
But I really jus' wanna
Go home and show
The love and respect
I have for them
They do so many things for me
Now and then
Things are changin' before my eyes
Three months is a while
To be out of my life
It's hard to believe half this shhh
Because I'm so far away
Worryin' 'bout my friends that I left at home
Thinkin' 'bout what they'll do
When they feel alone
Wonderin' what they'll smoke
Jus' to feel better
Been 'bout a month
Since I got a letter
What happened to the boys
That I thought I had?
Things are changin' in this world
And I'm feelin' bad
Things are changin' before my eyes
Three months is a while
To be out of my life
It's hard to believe half this shhh
Because I'm so far away

-Ryan

**jail, knives and fights.
I don't need it no more.**

The Weed

Sitting in my cell looking at the nut-covered screen watching a weed grow in the concrete and thinking it was me. No one wants it there but it comes back time and time again. Never dying, never learning it's lesson, just rebelling against everything everyone has to say until one day they get rid of it, throw it away with the rest of the world's trash.

They lock it up and throw away the key never to be seen again. Yes boys and girls — that's what I mean. I am here and I am going to have a chance to chase another dream. I am sent away, about to turn 18, and I don't know when I am getting out.

The moral is if you take any thing from this, let it be this: don't be the weed that everyone hates, be the flower. Be the one in power of your life.

-Justin

OLD TOWN MARYLAND (CONT.)

Changes

Thinking back upon my life, things have changed
And some will always remain.
Staying up all night, not being able to sleep
My eyes wide open while my momma weeps
It got so bad, it put me through sock
Sometimes I wished my clock would stop
My best friend seemed to be the captain
Wherever I went, we made it happen
Staying up late, waiting for the perfect time
To sneak downstairs and make my life mine
My dad's asleep just down the hall
Thinking I'm asleep but I'm totally in a different world
Waking up the next morning was the worst part feeling like shhh
But not being able to change it
The only way I knew to cope
Was to wake up and hit the slopes
My life has changed a lot since then
I've opened my eyes and took a look inside
I've changed the way I look at life
I've changed the way I used to fight
I've changed the way I deal with my problems
I don't always run and drink from the bottle
My life is still an everyday struggle
To keep myself from all that trouble
Although the past six years have been the hardest part of my life,
I wouldn't change anything I have done, 'cause it makes me the
person I am today. As each day passes, I feel better and better about
who I am as a person.

-JW

Giving Up

I been giving up for long enough.
I'm not giving up no more.
My body is sore from giving up.
It feels like I been touched from heavens of earth,
it feels like a rebirth from a bad curse.
I'm just set to be at my worst.
The only place I saw myself going was in a hearse.
But now is like a burst of flames.
No more smoking weed,
no more going back to the drug game.
Now I look at all as lame,
but sometimes I feel like going back to the same,
but instead the good direction is where I aim,
'cause I been giving up long enough,
I'm not going to give up no more.
I'm not going to be stealing from stores
worrying about having to knock people to the floor.
I won't have to worry about getting locked up no more.
My heart turned left and right,
all I wanted was street life,
jail, knives and fights.
I don't need it no more.
I gave up too many times.
My brother died,
now I realize
I want to make him proud —
so then why mess up?
So, I don't give up.
I'm not gonna be doing this to myself.
And I'm never going to think about weed.
I got my brother in heaven looking over me,
so now is time for the world to see there is a good side of me.

-VJ

THE BEAT WITHOUT

The Beat Without

OLD TOWN MARYLAND (CONT.)

Feel And Fear

When fear grabs you deep in your heart and holds you tight
icy cold fingers crushing your heart
let light get hold of the fear.
Grip it in return, hold with all of your might
though it hurts your face, you will conquer your fear.
Always try hard and remember not to quit
it is just the product of the unknown.
Learn and the strength of you will show
and beckon to those who also feel the hatred of fear
and they will know that hope at last is here.

-Justin

Memories

Thinking back upon memories...
Friends become faces
Homes that were full of love
Become only places
Dreams turn into fantasy and those into thoughts
And even those fade away into memories of heart
And the history of our lives becomes just a timeless tale
Stories of hopes, strengths, and struggles and even moments when we fail
Thinking back upon memories...

I hear people say Disneyland is magical. In my opinion it is just a theme park — this place is where the real magic is.

My Life

Sitting in my cell
Staring at the wall
I've come to realize
I've got no one
Not a staff or attorney
Even care I exist
It drives me crazy
And I'm so sick of it
It's a big world out there
So evil and cruel
Less and less people
Live to get old
With so much hatred
Leading to so much fear
All any one can think is
How the hell do I get out of here?
But there is no place to run
And no place to hide
The world will never find peace
No matter how hard we should try
A lot of people out there
Cannot find any reasons
To stick around and live
It's not a surprise
Most of us are thugs
We cannot seek help
Because it is against our rules
So we steal, sell, and continue to use
We are greedy for money, girls, respect, and fame
But deep down inside
We know our morals are really lame
But we're too afraid to admit
To what we feel
We're to scared of the consequences
Of getting killed
Stay true to your self
And you're bound to get far.

Color Outside The Lines

Low is low
High is high
Everybody wants to go to heaven
but nobody wants to die...
Nobody wants to do the don'ts
Don't what is
Color outside the lines
And nobody wants to try

-VJ

All I Feel

Being stuck in my room
All I feel is pain
I have been hurt so many times
My heart got a permanent scar
The only thing I need in life
Is not here next to me
I wonder if this me will be a "we"
Or if the Hall is my destiny
I feel trapped and alone
It even hurts more
Knowing I won't even be home
I sometimes wish
He won't ever be born
I guess the world is a rose
And my family is the only thorn

-Justin

Try

A goal is a dream
With a realistic view
It provides the motivation to do
What you want to do
A purpose is but a blueprint
To follow in your life
It will get you where you are going
A failure is but a success
When you turn it all around
You must get back up
When trouble gets you down
A success is a failure
When you take a good luck
All the revealing pages
In life's big story book

-Justin

A Lot To Say

My name is Justin and I have a lot to say. This place has helped me start something I never thought I could do.

When I got here I cared about no one and nothing. I did things to hurt strangers for kicks and giggles. I even hurt the people that love me the most in this world.

I would take money and anything else I could get my hands on from my dad, and I even took my grandma's car. I didn't care about any one or anything including myself. This place has helped me build a good relationship with my dad. Now I have gotten back in touch with my conscience. I feel really bad about the things I had done to my dad and grandma.

This place has helped me realize how I affect people around me and how that affects me or makes me feel. It has helped me see what I want to do with the rest of my life and how to get there. They have taught me how to push myself to do things that I never thought I could do. Some of those things are going to college, hiking 174.7 miles with a messed up knee, and canoe the Allegheny.

This place gives everyone a chance if they want to take it and will do the work to get there. I have been to lots of places and this one gives you a real chance at starting over, fixing and changing your life. I hear people say Disneyland is magical. In my opinion it is just a theme park — this place is where the real magic is. They turn boys and young men that made poor choices and decisions into men and young men that will be very good citizens.

We can make it we just need help, a chance, love, and the best thing of all — good support. I know I have lots of growing to do but thank you to all the parents and grandparents that have stuck in there with all of us. I have to go now but I cannot leave without saying a few more things. This is a saying I heard in a book. "There were three frogs sitting on a log. One of the frogs decided to jump off. How many frogs were still on the log? There were still three because he just decided to jump — he did not act on it."

-Justin

-Justin

OLD TOWN MARYLAND (CONT.)

The Story Of My Decisions To Change My Life For Bad And Then For Good

This story will tell you about most of my life and how I got to this place. It is about money, drugs, sex and gangs. It will tell you how it all messed up my life. I was getting to make decisions that I thought were great for my life. I will explain why I thought everyone was crazy and why I thought they did not know what they were talking about.

I will start the story off in grade school. When I was young, people would pick on me for being white, having red hair and being in a middle class income family. One day, I got fed up with people picking on me so I stood up for myself the only way I know how — I got into a fight. That was the first time I got suspended for fighting.

People stopped picking on me. Every time people went to pick on me, I would fight them and would not stop until I won. I started gaining people's respect for fighting people that were bigger, stronger and older than me. I would never back down from a fight. People would call me "Red" because of my red hair and because every time I would get angry, I would turn red.

When I was in third grade, I started spending my money on candy, chips and sodas. Then I would sell them for more money so I could eat better. I went from getting picked on to picking on them. I did that all the way up until sixth grade when it got worse.

In the sixth grade, my mentor got killed by a rival gang member when he was walking through the mall. I joined the gang because I wanted revenge and I liked to fight. I went from fighting to defend myself, to fighting for the fun of it. I began selling drugs instead of selling junk food so I could eat better.

I was making more money than I needed for food, so I started buying clothes and jewelry. I wanted to look like I had lots of money and like I could buy anything. I started buying everyone just about anything they ever wanted. I had more money than I knew what to do with.

I got suspended so many times that they told me to not come back next year. So I started a new school for the eighth grade and stirred up more trouble than ever before. I got suspended so many times that I began to hate school even more now and looked forward to hanging out with all of my boys in lockdown.

I got locked up for more than two years because I did not want to change and do good. I got out in time for my sophomore year of

high school. I met up with my real bad friends from my first junior high school. I began selling more and committing crimes. I started doing as bad as I could for the fun of it. But this time I was hiding it, so I would not get locked up again.

I got really bad in doing crimes and selling drugs and school was in my way of doing these things. So I stopped going to school halfway through my sophomore year and did as many things as I could do, because I acted like it was my last day on the outside. The last week of the year, my dad found out that I was not going to school. Then I got arrested for taking my grandma's car at 3:00AM on Memorial Day and I got into a high-speed car chase. So, I got locked up in her county.

They finally let me go after two months. I went back to school and got enrolled in summer school. I had the time of my life; every day was a party because I know I was going to be getting locked up soon so I might as well do all I could now. I was doing good in school until one day when my friends came up to me and asked me if I wanted to go out and have fun. I said yes. We went out and had lots of fun and got back in time for the end of school so we could go out with the people in school and have more fun.

The next day we did the same thing but when we were out we got into a lot of fights with rival gang members. On our way back to school, some of my friends kicked a store window in. When we got to school, I got in a fight and the principal and campus policemen came over. Two of my friends left, so it was me and one of my friends. Then two cop cars came up and arrested us for destruction of property and intoxication in public. When they called my dad he was on the phone with my PO talking about what they will give me in court for taking my grandma's car.

I spent about six months in lockup. They were trying to link me with another one of my friends who broke into over 350 houses. When he went in, he would take anything he could and then take their car and I was in one of those cars. He had told me his mom and dad bought it for him. I spent all my time in there trying to fight my way out of that case and to go somewhere I could go and have a chance of changing my life.

All six months the DA was trying to send me back to the Ranch I had already gone to. I was trying to go somewhere else and my dad did not want me going back there. We came to an agreement that I would get sent to a better place for longer and now — here I am. The decision to change my life was the best one I have ever made. I hope the outcome is that I can live a good and happy life. To be continued...

-Justin

I'm About To Spit

I'm about to spit on Eminem
'Cause the way he acts
is so feminine
shhh on them
think you gonna diss me and then
I come out with a rhyme
To speak what I think
Poor guy uses peroxide
When it comes to rhymes
I'm cyanide
You and 50 say you're hot on the streets
But when it comes to the streets
You ain't nothin' but beat
Aftermath in the house
Everybody run
When the house is empty
I'm gon' have my fun
You only had a ma
Not a father image
Got a DNA test
Left with a grimace
Don't get mad at me
'Cause I spit the truth
Come to talk shhh
You gon' lose a tooth
You wanna write rhymes
Just write what's real
'Cause the stories that you write
Are a big freakin deal

-Ryan

Life

Life with no fears is like blood and no tears
Life with no pain is like a player and no game
Life with no goals is like a golf course and no holes
Life with no fun is like the moon and no sun
Life with no regret is like work and no sweat
Life with no books is like a fishing pole with no hooks

-Justin

My Goal

In and out of lockdown,
don't know when I'm getting out.
Now always putting it down.
Never worrying, never hurting,
always just chillin' like a villain
on the coast grillin'.
Always macking, never slacking,
always packing, waiting for something to pop off.
Smacking people telling them to knock it off
and take it off 'cause I want that shhh.
Never caught dead with the same girl two nights in a row.
I was always trying to achieve my goal
of making it to death row.
Now I'm closer than ever
wishing I would have listened to the people around me
instead of them being put in the ground because of me.
I wish I could change it all
instead of wasting my life in the Hall.

-Justin

**Rewind back to me putting
my so-called
Friends before my family,
not yet realizing
That family love is
everlasting — love from
My friends comes
sporadically.**

check out the rest of Shawn Rogers and the rest of the Ed Note contest winners on page 57